The Tribune-Democrat
METRO
Monday, April 11, 1983

Richland Sesquicentennial 1833 1983

Roger Kerekes/The Tribune-Democrat

Celebration kickoff

Richland Township's sesquicentennial celebration began officially Sunday with a community religious service at the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown Sports Center. The Rev. Don Sease, at podium, was the keynote speaker for the service, which drew a large gathering. The celebration will continue through Oct. 15 with a long list of events planned.

The Era

Vol. 85, No. 39 Tuesday, April 12, 1983

Their posters were the best

The winners have been announced in a sesquicentennial poster contest sponsored by the Richland Sesquicentennial Committee. The contest was held in conjunction with the observance of the township's 150th year.

The winners are as follows:

Grades 9-12: Karen Geiser, first; Donna Penatzer, second; and Martha Vance, third, all students at Greater Johnstown Area Vocational-Technical School.

Grades 6-8: Jeff Pierce and Dave Armstrong, first; Fred Wenderoth and Brian Hunter, second; and Tricia Chontas and Jackie Kessler, third, all students at Richland Middle School.

Grades 4-5: Carolee Lech, first, Rachel Hill Elementary School; Scott Jugan, second, Rachel Hill; and Stephanie Cominsky, third, St. Benedict's School.

Grades 1-3: Christopher Rokita, first, St. Benedict's; Jill Laslo, second, University Park Elementary School; and Melissa Gardner, third, St. Benedict's.

Photo by Roger Kerekes

Sesquicentennial begins

Michael Bodolosky, choral and band director at Richland High School, directs the high school chorus at a community religious service officially opening Richland Township's sesquicentennial celebration. The Rev. Don Sease of the United Methodist Retirement Community was the main speaker. The celebration will continue through Oct. 15. This community religious service was held at the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown Sports Center. *(See related stories on Page 3)*

Week 1
March 15

Conrad Kunkle settled in Richland Township

By James W. Siehl

Estimates are that the photo of the Conrad Kunkle family that accompanies this story was taken at the turn of the century — possibly in 1900.

It is among a collection of pictures and memorabilia of former times being assembled by the sesquicentennial historic committee as Richland Township prepares to celebrate its 150th birthday.

Conrad Kunkle was born in 1852 and died 80 years later in 1932. He was raised on a farm at the site of Windber Hospital. After his marriage to Margaret Shuman, the couple settled on a 27-acre plot of ground in Walsall, Richland Township. Their house is pictured in the background.

Mr. Kunkle worked as a watchman for the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad.

In his younger days, while residing in Scalp Level, he marched from Windber to Johnstown with soldiers who had enlisted to fight in the Civil War. The group then boarded a train for Altoona.

In addition to working as a watchman, Mr. Kunkle raised crops on his small farm and bought and sold furs and ginseng, a perennial plant with flat clusters of small white or greenish flowers, and often fragrant leaves.

He kept busy

Mr. Kunkle was a hunter and a trapper. He grafted trees. He husked corn for area farmers, and was paid by the bushel.

In the photo, from left to right, are Conrad Kunkle, Albert Kunkle (baby), Margaret Kunkle, Nora (Kunkle) Dutton, Kathryn Kunkle (child), Walter Kunkle (baby), Mary (Kunkle) Donaldson, John Kunkle (baby) and Renee Kunkle.

The photo and background information was provided by David Samuel, retired teacher from the Richland School District. Mr. Samuel is a grandson of Conrad Kunkle.

The historical committee is particularly interested in having the opportunity to make copies of photographs or other pertinent items which may be used in displays during the special observance as well as to become part of a permanent record of trend-setting events in the life of the township.

Some of this data will appear in a promotional booklet being prepared to keynote activities. Later in the year, the steering committee, headed by James Mock, chief of the township police department, hopes to publish a commemorative historical document.

While memorabilia from early days are appreciated, the committee is just as interested in history and photographs of more recent vintage — including activities of the '30s, '40s and '50s and later.

The Highland Community Library, Luray Avenue, has accepted the responsiblity of processing the data submitted. If possible, photographs should include identification, location and approximate date when they were taken.

The library also will serve as a central location for keeping research materials and copied information until permanent facilities are established, possibly through the efforts of a proposed Richland historical society.

Keep your own scrapbook

Readers of The Era may want to keep their own scrapbook of published pictures and tales about people and past events in Richland Township.

Beginning with the accompanying acount of Conrad Kunkle, farmer and trapper, The Era will be carrying a series of features from data collected by the historical committee as part of Richland Township's sesquicentennial celebration.

Residents have been asked to share their personal pieces of township history by taking them to the Highland Community Library, Luray Avenue, for copying or left on a loan basis to be used in displays.

The committee is interested in photographs from all eras — particularly those which give another look to a now familiar area.

Week 2
March 22

Memories of RHS girls' 1925-26 hoop team recalled

By James W. Siehl

These young women formed the third girls' basketball team to represent Richland High School.

The year was 1925-26.

The only senior on the team, Susan Green, who went on to a respected 48-year-teaching career in the Richland School District, recalled that the team had a winning season, but couldn't remember how many times it triumphed.

"I hadn't thought about it for a long, long time," she said. "But, we definitely had a successful season."

The team was coached by Margaret "Peg" Stull, a graduate of Pennsylvania State University who was in her first year of teaching.

Miss Green got a laugh looking back on the girls' playing attire.

"They wore bloomers and middies," she said — black sateen bloomers and white middie skirts."

The girls also wore knee stockings — "full-length stockings," she emphasized. Then, adding with another chuckle, "We wore garters to keep them up. Oh my yes! You would never show your knees."

The memory triggered a recollection of the time when her older sister, Rosemary, came home with a graduation present from Harry Gresh, who had operated a little store at the site of the parking lot at the R. Owen Ketterer Funeral Home, Bedford Street, in Geistown.

"Mr. Gresh always gave everybody a graduation present," Miss Green said. He gave my sister a pair of black stockings with red roses on the knees. And, when she brought those home, my Dad flipped. She never wore them."

Then, with another laugh, she added:

"I don't know if I would wear them today either."

According to Miss Green, the team played its games on the tiny floor at the former high school in Geistown, Lamberd Avenue.

"We used to get that so packed, you couldn't get in," she said.

Many times, the girls' games were played before the boys' games.

Miss Green remembered playing Dale High School and taking a school bus to Nanty Glo for a contest. The latter encounter was particularly eventful. It was played in a garage, she said, and ended with some rowdies stoning the bus.

In addition to games with other high school teams, Miss Green said independent teams were scheduled.

A guard her senior year, Miss Green played in an era when the girls' rules would not permit the guards to advance beyond center court. As a result, the two forwards and center did all the basket-making.

However, Miss Green said the team often used boys' rules and frequently scrimmaged the Richland High School boys' team.

From left to right in the photograph accompanying this story, members of the Richland 1925-26 team included:

Front — Susan Green, Mary Hershberger, Beatrice Storck, Beatrice Gindlesberger and Ethel Allison.

Back — Margaret Stull, coach; Grace Garretson, Lucy Jenkins, Agusta Raab, Violet Blough and Mildred Dovey.

All are living with the exception of Beatrice Storck, Margaret Stull and Violet Blough. Miss Green was a sophomore on Richland's first girls' basketball team which was organized for the 1923-24 season under the coaching of John Sherman.

Scrapbook suggestion

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Week 3
March 29

Hostetler family migrated from eastern part of state

By James W. Siehl

Eighty-seven years ago, when this picture was taken, the area bordering Scalp Level in Richland Township and the Luther Road junction with Scalp Avenue was nothing but farmland.

Specifically, the ground — about 400 acres worth — was the property of Henry Hostetler. His ancestors, some three or four generations back, had moved here from eastern Pennsylvania.

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To appreciate a flavor of the times, in 1896 a dollar would "buy the finest in ladies' shoes," according to an ad by Simon's in The Johnstown Tribune.

Henderson Furniture Co. was selling a solid oak chamber suite worth $20 for $13.75. Woolf's, "Johnstown's largest clothiers," had its finest overcoats, regularly $15, $18 and $20, on sale for $10.

Swank Hardware Co. was advertising a Tinkham Package Carrier, a pedal-powered three-wheel vehicle making an impact on the American market after more than 100,000 had been sold in England. The ad read:

"This carrier may be run by any boy 12 or 15 for delivery of goods of all kind. Much more convenient and economical than a horse and wagon for quick transportation of all light merchandise by grocers, confectioners, florists, newsdealers and laundrymen. Price $150."

Easter bonnets were being offered for $1 to $3 each. Miller's vein coal was being delivered at $1.25 a ton.

In the news, Johnstown's oldest livery stable, operated by Charles Zimmerman on Locust Street, was up for sale — including the building, horses and harness.

118 years old

At that time, the Hostetler homestead was situated in the vicinity of the Follow Charley Car Wash operation along Scalp Avenue. The farmhouse was built about 1865 — 118 years ago.

Henry Hostetler was born in Scalp Level in 1842. He and Mary Weaver were married in 1865.

In the accompanying photo, from left to right are:

Front — Henry Hostetler, Arthur Hostetler, Mary (Weaver) Hostetler and Emma Hostetler.

Back — Stephen Hostetler, Hiram Hostetler, Abram Hostetler, Elizabeth Hostetler, Lewis Hostetler and housekeeper, Frances Hoffman.

In later years, Henry Hostetler divided his farm among his sons, Abram, Stephen, Hiram and Lewis, and son-in-law, Calvin Frye.

Hiram's farm took in the land in the area of Terlyn Drive and Berwick Road. Calvin Frye and his wife, the former Emma Hostetler, farmed the land that extended to property now owned by the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown.

Lewis' farm bisected Route 56 between the junction of Theatre Drive and Eisenhower Boulevard. Abram's farm was in the area of the University Park Shopping Center. And, Stephen's farm was off the Hostetler Road now occupied by the Richland Bowl.

Numerous descendants from this early Richland Township family continue to reside in the area and contribute to its growth.

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The Era

Vol. 85, No. 38 Tuesday, April 5, 1983

Sesquicentennial Scrapbook

Yesteryear's memories bring recognition for Mrs. Fisher

By James W. Siehl

A nostalgic journey into the past has brought three people recognition for their writing talent. The trio entered an essay contest for senior citizens aimed at having fun with memories of yesteryear in Richland Townhip.

The Highland Community Library, Luray Avenue, sponsored the event as part of a sesquicentennial celebration, which officially will get under way with an ecumenical service at 2 p.m. Sunday at the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown.

Awarded commemorative plaques for their winning compositions are Eliza (Hancock) Fisher, 258 Arbutus Ave., first; Mildred (Dovey) Grimaldi, 302 Fair Ave. second; and David W. Samuel, 625 Belmont Ave., third.

Writing on the theme, "I Remember Richland," Mrs. Fisher, a widow of 25 years, recalled when her school teacher at the old Blough School, unable to get home during snowstorms, stayed at the Fisher residence.

She remembered riding to Church Grove School in a wagon drawn by horses, snuggled in straw with blankets warming the legs and feet ... of long sled glides (without stopping) from Hostetler Road almost as far as Krings Bridge ... chestnut hunting ... playing in the leaves at Arbutus Park Camp Ground ... wonderfully tasting spring water at the old Log House in Belmont ... farms and knowing everyone for miles around ... and the happy women and girl talk during meetings in each other's home to quilt.

Photo by Dean Maxwell

Mildred (Dovey) Grimaldi David W. Samuel Eliza (Hancock) Fisher

. . . their essays were winners

Was surprised

"That's the way I like to think of Richland Township," said Mrs. Fisher, who expressed surprise that her entry had been declared the contest winner. "I wrote it just for fun."

Mrs. Fisher's roots reach into Bedford County. Her late parents, Franklin and Harriet (Stapleton) Hancock, were born in Ryot and Saxton, respectively.

They moved here 78 years ago and resided in Hornerstown a short time before purchasing 10 acres of ground in Richland Township from Charles Shaffer. The property was partially bounded by what now is known as Arbutus Avenue and Parker Road.

Mrs. Fisher, who resides in a house built on that tract, was the only daughter among five children in her family. She was born in Johnstown June 14, 1908.

Her father formerly worked for John Thomas feed store. The John Thomas store, then situated along Main Street, was one of Johnstown's finest department stores.

After the death of her husband, Clyde, Mrs. Fisher became a practical nurse and worked at Mercy Hospital until her retirement about 10 years ago.

A modest winner, Mrs. Fisher said:

"I never dreamed I would win. My daughter kept saying, ' I hope, I hope you win. ' I'm just doubly delighted for her."

"I Remember Richland"

By Eliza Hancock Fisher

I remember Amy Mangus, "Miss Amy" as we were taught to call her, teaching at the old Blough School. "Miss Amy" stayed at our house when the weather was too bad for her to go home.

I remember starting to first grade at Church Grove. We were taken by wagon, pulled by two horses. In the winter we went by sled, the bed filled with straw, and blankets to cover our feet and legs.

Later a new Blough School was built on the corner of Krings Street and Parker Road. We walked to school; in winter we often waded through snow up to our waist.

I remember sled riding on what is now Hostetler and Parker roads and Krings street. If conditions were right, and if we were lucky, we could start at Kopriva's Store and go all the way to the Krings Bridge without stopping. Of course, we made only two or three trips an evening, as that was a long walk back.

I remember the Arbutus Park Camp Ground. We hunted chestnuts and played in the leaves many times at the park. During the summer, church services were held for two weeks in an open auditorium. On Sunday the people would start coming at daylight, on horses and in buggies or surreys, and continue until midnight to attend services. Many people brought picnic lunches, although meals were available at the park. My mother always had crowds for Sunday dinner.

I remember walking across the hill, wading through the snow, to visit Spicher's who lived in the old log house in Belmont. There was a wonderful spring of water outside their back door.

I remember Arbutus Avenue being a "dirt" road, and in winter when the snow would drift, Moses Miller would come with two horses drawing a "snow plow" made of three planks fastened together in a big triangle. The men of the neighborhood would walk behind the plow with shovels, to shovel where necessary.

I remember all the farms and knowing everyone for miles around. We would visit on Sunday or in the evening.

I remember the neighbors going from farm to farm, to help with the threshing and hay-making in the summer and with butchering in winter.

I remember the girls and women meeting in each others homes to quilt.

I remember Richland Township when it was a quiet, peaceful farm community, when it was really a "rich land."

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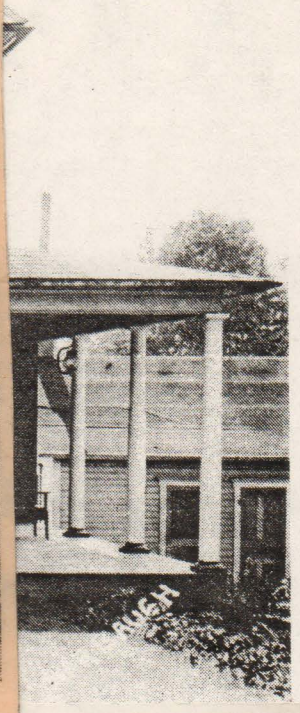
#5 April 12/83

Week 5
April 12

. . . Richland Township house from the past



Sesquicentennial Scrapbook

Home has pleasant memories for Richland Township woman

By James W. Siehl

This brick structure, built in 1908 by Abraham C. Weaver, graced the Scalp Avenue section of Richland Township until giving way to a road-improvement project.

The five-bedroom, three-story house, last occupied by Ralph and Elsie (Weaver) Shaffer, was torn down when the Route 219 access was constructed across from the former Church Grove School.

The accompanying family photo is the possession of Kathleen McClain of 1019 Gap Ave, granddaughter of Abraham and Mary Ann (Stutzman) Weaver. They are pictured in the center in the first row. Grouped around are the Weavers' six sons, three daughters and their sons-in-law and daughters-in-law.

"I have a lot of pleasant memories," said Mrs. McClain, who used to reside in the house with her parents, Elmer and Goldie (Weaver) Rouser.

Mrs. McClain remembers vividly the four large rooms downstairs, along with a pantry and sewing room. She said the house was heated with a coal-fired, hot-water system.

Her grandfather also built a barn on the property. Although retired, he kept a few chickens and a cow and had a small vegetable garden, Mrs. McClain said.

As a farmer, community leader and active church figure, Abraham Weaver made substantial contributions to Richland Township's 150-year-old history.

It was after retiring as a farmer that he moved to the big brick house in 1908.

He was born in Richland Township Oct. 2, 1851, the son of Christ and Susan (Keim) Weaver.

After he and his wife were married in 1873, they began operating a large fruit farm near Mine 37, Windber. It was known as the Mountain Orchard Farm. He also began dealing in horses.

Most of the time, Mr. Weaver maintained a stable of 30 horses and often took horse-and-buggy trips of 500 miles.

He had an important part in the construction of an old toll road from Johnstown to Scalp Level, supervising it for six years.

For 32 years, Mr. Weaver served on the Richland Township School Board. He also was an associate assessor.

His descendants are numerous. When killed at 9:15 p.m. May 1, 1943, in a car-pedestrian accident at the age of 91, Mr. Weaver left nine children, 59 grandchildren, 63 great-grandchildren and two great-great grandchildren.

A member of Church Grove Mennonite Church for 73 years, Mr. Weaver was killed a short distance from his home. He had just left the church and was crossing Route 56 when he was struck by a car operated by his neighbor, a 17-year-old youth. The accident happened in a heavy rainstorm.

His surviving children in 1943 included:

Lewis, Alonzo, Earl, Howard, Ross and Mahlon Weaver and Mrs. Fred Patrick, Mrs. Ralph Shaffer and Mrs. Elmer Rouser.

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Sesquicentennial Scrapbook

First Richland High musical organization made its appearance during 1925-26 term

By James W. Siehl

Directed by a member of the senior class, the first musical organization at Richland High School made its appearance in the 1925-26 school term.

The accompanying photo is the property of Mrs. Rudolph Leffler of Johnstown R. D. 5, the former Mary Katherine Dravis and flutist with the pioneer ensemble.

The trumpeters are Robert Nowell (left) and Paul Weaver. The banjo player is Clarence Livengood.

The others (left to right) include Betty Pontius, drums; Boyer Allen and Ernest Kinsey, saxophonists; Mildred Allen, pianist; Elizabeth Heldt and Helen Pennik, violinists; and Mary Katherine Dravis.

Mrs. Leffler, great-granddaughter of Joseph Geis, founder of Geistown Borough, remembered that she was a sophomore when this photo was made.

Richland High School then occupied the brick building at Bedford Street and Lamberd Avenue.

Mrs. Leffler wasn't certain, but said she thought Boyer Allen, who went on to make a career out of music, had organized the group. He was the director.

"He knew how to play all of the instruments," she said."He went off to college ... married our teacher by the way. They both went to college."

When asked if the fledgling orchestra had played a spring concert, Mrs. Leffler laughed and said:

"There were no concerts. There was nothing like that at the time. If there were a parent-teacher night, we would play or for assembly hall. It was mostly if there was something going on in the school we would play."

Mrs. Leffler said all of the group members studied music privately.

"I originally took lessons from a nun down at St. Joseph's (in the city). I took flute lessons from Mr. Flynn. He was great."

Mrs. Leffler, who couldn't recall Mr. Flynn's first name, said he and his wife had their own studio. She said Mrs. Flynn taught piano and her husband taught the other instruments.

Mrs. Leffler studied piano at the Johnstown College of Music. She said she never preferred the flute.

"In fact," she said, "I wanted a violin, but my parents couldn't afford it. The only reason I took the flute was because it was bought for my brother, Harry Dravis, and he didn't like it. So, I took it up to save the flute."

Individual classes at Richland still were small when this photo was made. Three years later, Mrs. Leffler's 1929 graduating class consisted of 19 members.

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organization

1925-26 term

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Week 7
April 26

Here's how St. Benedict's Catholic Church began

By James W. Siehl

Prior to 1911, Catholic churchgoers who resided in the little farm village of Geistown rolled on wooden wheels over a dusty road leading to St. Joseph's Church in Johnstown.

Those early experiences are recalled by Mary Katherine Leffler of Johnstown R. D. 5, great-granddaughter of Joseph Geis, founder of Geistown.

Mrs. Leffler remembered that time had to be allowed for the horses to drink at the trough in Oakland.

She said:"The ride home was even more exhausting because of the steep grades that numbered the route. By the time the last climb was reached, mothers fidgeted and fussed because dinner had to be gotten, and it was already way past noon.

"However, only illness at home would have kept them from attending Mass every Sunday at St. Joseph's church."

Stressing the length those early pioneers went to bring religion into their homes, Mrs. Leffler said that in 1894, her grandmother, the former Catherine Geis, left her husband and farm work in Geistown and went to live in a rented house in Johnstown for the winter. She took along her children and those of her sister in order that they could prepare for their first Holy Communion."

According to Mrs. Leffler, because of their great love for God these pioneers accepted the sacrifice necessary to receive Mass and pass on their faith to their children.

"But, in the back of their minds was the ever present hope of having a Catholic church and school in Geistown, she recalled."

No priest

As early as 1893, a little chapel stood at the rear of St. Joseph's Cemetery on a piece of the Joseph Geis farm, where once Civil War soldiers had camped. The site was donated for the chapel. The building itself was constructed from cash gifts. However, the chapel never was used for Sunday Masses for a simple reason. No priest was available. It was used on All Soul's Day and occasionally for a funeral.

It was after one of these funeral processions that a group of women approached Father Maximilian and implored him to help them to organize a Mission church.

Although the number of Catholic families in Geistown at that time was only 16, Bishop Eugene A. Garvey gave his consent, and St. Benedict's became a Mission of St. Joseph's church. The first services were held May 11, 1911.

At first, Mass was held only every other Sunday. This meant that the parishioners still had to make the trip to St. Joseph's twice a month. But, it wasn't too long that Father Maximilian came every Sunday.

As early as 1895, there was a movement for a Catholic school in Geistown. The chapel was utilized for this purpose. But, after four years the struggle became too great and once again there was no alternative but for the children to attend public school.

Mrs. Leffler remembered hearing her mother talking about the daily ringing of the Angelus bell, which was the responsibility of her family. The trip through the cemetery was made three times a day, regardless of the weather.

Among the memories Mrs. Leffler cherishes are those meeting Father Maximilian's buggy at the cemetery gate:

"Climbing up on the seat beside him, I was permitted to take the reins, but not to speak, as Father had the Blessed Host with him. Father Maximilian was my hero, and this privilege made me very happy."

In November 1911, a one-room school was built for the sum of $800. By 1921, the onrush of children became so great that Sisters Mildred and Aloyse from the Franciscian Convent came to see what could be done.

In their wisdom, half of the pupils were placed in the pews of the chapel at the rear of the cemetery. Three grades of the smaller children were kept in the old school.

Said Mrs. Leffler:

"The younger children were quite comfortable in the little school with its pot-bellied stove. But, in the chapel, the older children met with many hardships. The three months spent there while waiting for the new school to be completed were unusually cold.

"There was a furnace. But with only school boys to fire it, we were never warm. A few of us, who had toy desks, lugged them through the cemetery into the chapel. The other children sat on the narrow, hard-kneeling rails and used the seats of the pews for their desks. This position was back-breaking."

Formally opened

The new school formally opened Dec. 1, 1921.

After the death of Father Maximilian, Father Valerian, another Benedictine, was appointed as parish priest at St. Benedict's. Two new Sisters, Bertilla and Lucretia, came from Millvale.

After the death of Father Valerian, Father Roman served briefly. Sister Imelda and Sister Constantine replaced Sister Bertilla and Sister Lucretia.

In 1930, Bishop McCort declared St. Benedict's as an independent parish and appointed Father Cletus Barroner as pastor.

The chapel was tediously moved from its old home in the cemetery and placed beside Route 56, where it gave way to an expanded church.

Particularly meaningful to Mrs. Leffler and her husband, Rudolph, is the fact that they were the first couple to be married in the independent church.

The year was 1919. This is one of the earliest First Holy Communion classes when St. Benedict's Catholic Church, Geistown, was a Mission of St. Joseph's Catholic Church, Johnstown. In the background is the former Mission chapel, which at the time stood at the rear of St. Joseph's Cemetery (see accompanying photo). Father Maximilian, OSB, a Benedictine Monk stationed at St. Joseph's church, is included in the picture along with Rose Kleinmeyer, one of the teachers. Father Max, his galoshes always in tow, endeared himself with his dedication to the Geistown faithful, often walking the distance from Old Conemaugh Borough. He did take a horse and buggy, but only on Sundays, according to Mrs. Rudolph Leffler, the former Mary Katherine Dravis. Mrs. Leffler said she is the one pouting (second row, fourth from left).

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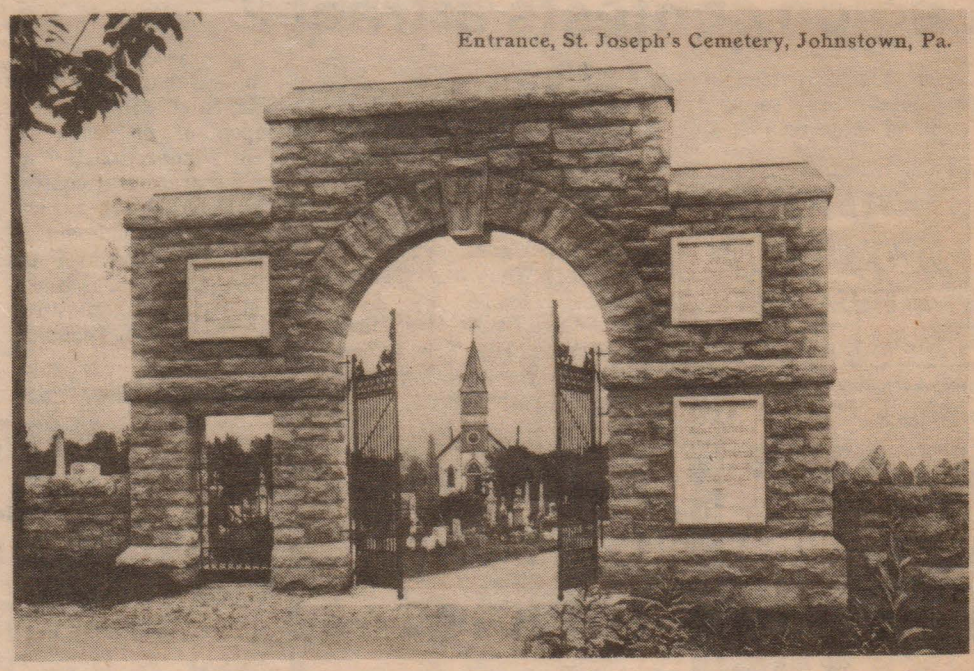


Entrance, St. Joseph's Cemetery, Johnstown, Pa.

Week 8
May 3

Throngs attended services at Arbutus Campground

By James W. Siehl

Before the automobile revolutionized America's lifestyle by providing new freedom of mobility, as many as 10,000 people crammed into "Beautiful Arbutus" to attend emotional services of worship at the Arbutus Park Campground.

So named for the abundant wild arbutus, a near extinct member of the evergreen family, the campground was situated on land now serving as a United Methodist Church retirement home.

Attractively landscaped and populated with huge oak trees, Arbutus Park's charm still is evident even though the lush farmlands and wooded acreage have yielded to surburban expansion since the turn of the century.

In 1900, a Conemaugh Valley Ministerial Association, composed of ministers of the United Evangelical Church in the Johnstown-Somerset area, decided there was a need for an assembly area to gather for fellowship and worship and to enjoy God's great out-of-doors.

Considerations were given to possible sites near Salix and Elton before agreement was reached to purchase a 15-acre tract belonging to John S. Blauch (Blough) at $100 an acre, to be paid within three years.

Only a short distance from the old homestead, the land was situated in what is now Geistown Borough. It had been a tree farm, with 10 acres heavily timbered with tall pines. The ground became available with the death of Mr. Blauch.

A group of visiting ministers

In May 1904, work began on clearing the land and constructing a tabernacle. The open structure consisted of a square roof supported by posts, 116 feet on each side.

Under this shelter, pews were aligned on a floor of sawdust.

Men, who were hired to clear and level the grounds, worked at hard labor 10 hours a day for $1.50.

A boarding dormitory was erected. A local church member received $1.50 a foot to drill two water wells. Construction of cottages started immediately. Those who built their own were given a free five-year lease.

Hitching rails for horses and driveways for traffic horses were provided.

Meals were served in the dormitory on Sundays and holidays. There was no inflated dollar in those days. The going rate for dinner was 35 cents for adults and 15 cents for children under 10 accompanied by an adult.

Entrance to campground

The rules and regulations required a policeman to be on the grounds for every service. Twenty dollars covered his services for the entire camp period.

With people sitting in a clearing on planks sawed from the trees, the first services were held the third week of August in 1904.

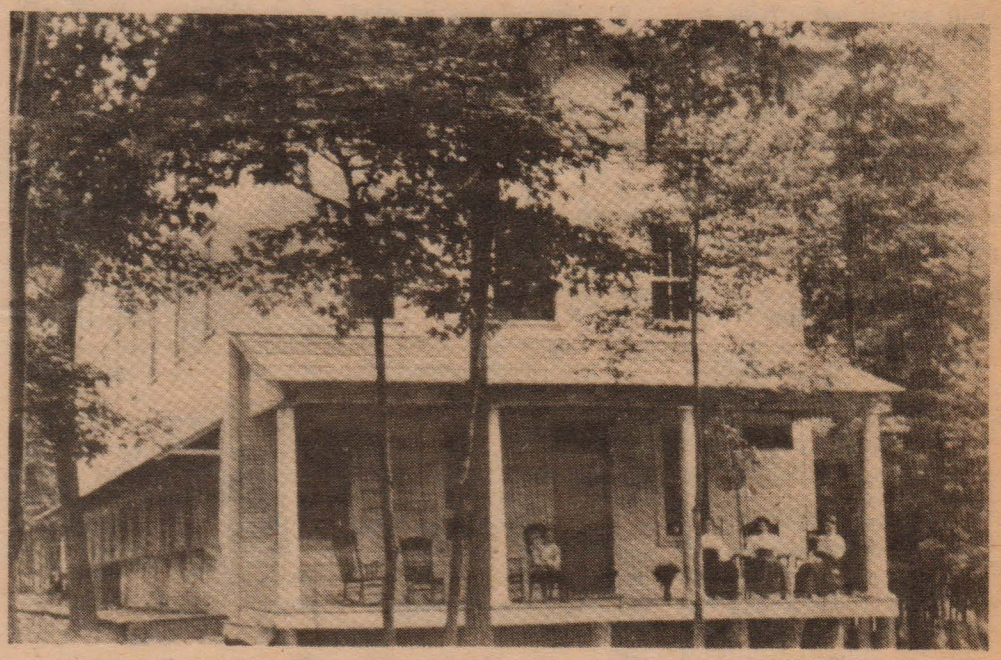
In November of the same year, purchase of 40 additional feet of frontage was approved to provide parking for horses and carriages.

The next spring, two 40-foot wings were added to the tabernacle and the length was increased by 30 feet. Cottages were moved back to allow more space for the tabernacle. A third story was built onto the boarding dormitory.

By 1908, interest in the campgrounds was producing crowds of up to 10,000 people. Services were held outside the auditorium in the southern area under the leadership of John M. Miller, one of the leaders in the development of the religious center.

So popular had the program become that persons wishing to stay on the grounds more than 21 days had to have special permission.

The lighting of the grounds in May 1915 was an important improvement. A bid of $128.25 was accepted from the Citizens Electric Co. to wire the auditorium, dormitory and caretaker's home.



Dormitory building on campground

After the merger of the Evangelical and United Brethren denominations in 1951, the park came under the guidance of the Board of Christian Education of the Western Pennsylvania Conference.

The committee began purchasing the cottages and razing them. Attendance at the summer services began dwindling.

In the summer of 1960, the tabernacle was braced for safety reasons. But the next February, it collapsed under the weight of a heavy snowfall.

After another merger — this time between the Evangelical United Brethren and the Methodist churches — and the passing of 10 years, the Arbutus Campgrounds gave way to a project that resulted in the existing attractive retirement complex.

Impact noted

In a history of the Arbutus Park Campgrounds, prepared by the late Dr. Boyd F. Coleman, the former pastor of Beulah United Methodist Church noted that no one will ever know the full impact 57 years of services had on those attending.

"Many souls were saved, many volunteered for Christian service, scores of precious souls came back from their wanderings and found peace of heart in Christ," he said.

He wrote about the abiding friendships developed among church members in the surrounding region:

"When the services were closed at Arbutus Park, we closed what might have been one of the outstanding religious centers in Western Pennsylvania."

Items of Interest (1926)

Arbutus Park is situated about two miles from Johnstown.

— Take the Moxham street car and alight at Ohio Street where auto bus, operated by the Johnstown Traction Company, will make connection with street cars for the park.

— Rising bell will ring at 6:30. Family worship at 7:30 a.m. each day. All persons on the ground are asked to be present.

— Price of meals: Breakfast, 25 cents; dinner, 50 cents; supper, 50 cents; a week, $7. Sunday dinner included in meal ticket, but no guests permitted. Half rates to ministers.

— Rooms in dormitory, one bed, $5.50; two beds, $7.50; 50 cents a person for lodging. Free loading to pastors in the preachers' cottages.

— A grocery and lunch counter will be maintained in connection with the dining hall by Charles Miller. He will carry a strictly fresh stock of groceries, fruits, bakery goods, milk, cured meats and other supplies. Only the real necessities will be sold on Sunday.

— No one shall be permitted at any time to keep cats or dogs in the park.

— The contents of chamber buckets must be emptied into the public or private closets and nowhere else.

— All games and sports are strictly forbidden on the grounds during divine services.

—The Camp season opens June 15 and closes Aug. 15.

Scrapbook suggestion

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Arbutus leaders

The Arbutus Park Campmeeting Association officials in 1929 were:

Presiding elders

The Rev. G. A. Collin, Franklin District.

The Rev. F. E. Hetrick, Johnstown District.

The Rev. R. C. Miller, Pittsburgh District.

Officers of the association

The Rev. F. W. Ware, president.

The Rev. E. L. Nicely, vice president.

The Rev. A. A. Hilleary, secretary.

G. W. Ellenberger, treasurer.

Week 9
May 10

Adams family made its mark in Richland-Geistown

By James W. Siehl

Before white people like Samuel Adams came here more than 200 years ago, Indian villages were scattered along the shores of the Conemaugh and its tributaries.

"Here the dusky warriors danced around the campfire, and shouted their songs of victory and defiance. Here the Indian mother hushed her children to sleep by chanting the glorious deeds of the red man.

"The eagle built his aerie upon the rocks and the bear, the wolf and the elk inhabited the unbroken wilderness.

"But, all this is changed. Pleasant fields and thriving towns now lie upon the margin of this stream. Forests, it is true, still wave in all their pristine wildness upon the overhanging mountains, but the ringing of the woodman's axe, the shrill whistle of the locomotive, and the ponderous thumping of the forge-hammer have frightened away the Indian and the eagle forever."

A young man not yet 30, Thomas J. Chapman, wrote the quoted passages in a small book he named "Valley of the Conemaugh," published in Altoona as the Civil War was ending in 1865.

Some historians credit Samuel Adams and four members of his family — Solomon, Archibald, Rachel and Benjamin — as being the first white settlers in Cambria County.

A number of local landmarks bear their name — among them Solomon Run, Sam's Run, Rachel Run, Rachel Hill and Adams Township.

Came from Berks

The Adams family came here from Berks County in the early 1770s and settled in what now is the Richland-Geistown area. The territory had been opened for settlement after being purchased from the Indians in 1768.

A fatal run-in with an Indian has preserved Sam Adams' place in local history.

He and the Indian apparently killed each other 210 years ago in a bloody encounter said to have taken place on Sandy Run about eight miles east of an Indian village called Conemaugh Old Town, situated at the point of the Little Conemaugh and Stonycreek rivers.

Lore has it they share a common grave in a corner of Richland Township, buried together in a patch of woods near Coles Crossroads.

Because the white men had bought their land, the local tribes of the Iroquois Nation, with a large village at the current location of the Quemahoning Dam, usually did not bother the settlers.

For that reason, it is believed some western tribe, perhaps one from Ohio or Michigan, may have been responsible for a raiding party which caused local families to seek safety at Fort Bedford, then a long, hard journey over the mountains, in the 1770s.

After the scare subsided, a group of men, among them Sam Adams, started back to their cabins with pack horses to collect their livestock.

Encountering no Indians, they were returning to the fort, traveling single file along the path, when one of the dogs became uneasy and ran away. While the others waited, two of the men went for the dog.

The men had gone only several hundred yards, when a body of Indians attacked the rear of the column to take prisoners. Others in the column came to assist. But, they turned and fled under the fire of the Indians — all except Samuel Adams.

According to A. J. Hite's "Hand-Book of Johnstown," Adams climbed a tree and began to fight in the Indian style. In a few minutes, however, he was shot to death, but not before an Indian also was mortally wounded.

When the news reached the fort, a party volunteering to inspect the area came across the bodies in ankle-deep snow. The face of the Indian had been covered by his companions with Adams' hunting shirt.

Differing views

Authorities differ as to both the date and manner in which the men died. Some place the year as 1785, and that Adams and the Indian killed each other with their knives while fighting around a white oak tree.

They were buried together near the spot where they were found.

It was through the work of a priest who loved local history that the location of the double grave is known.

The Rev. Modestus Wirtner, who served St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Johnstown and other parishes, marked the spot by standing two large, flat, pointed stones on edge in the ground.

It is not known how Father Wirtner pinpointed the grave.

One of the goals of the historical and steering committees assisting in Richland's sesquicentennial celebration is to permanently mark the grave with a historical marker.

After the area was opened for settlement, the region developed rapidly. Pioneers came in over the Kittanning Path to the northern part of the county, and over the Conemaugh Path into the southern sector.

On March 26, 1804, Cambria County was formed by legislative act, taking portions of Somerset and Huntingdon counties. Those counties had been formed from part of Bedford County nine years earlier.

Richland Township, taking its name from the rich earth, was formed in 1833. Adams Township was created from land in Richland Township in 1870.

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Photo by Dean Maxwell

Orlando Seese points out what legend has it are the graves of Sam Adams and an Indian in the Coles Crossroads section of Richland Township. Mr. Seese is showing the graves to his granddaughter, Jodi Horne. Looking on is Danvir Johnson, Jodi's uncle.

Photo by Dean Maxwell

Picturesque Sam's Run, as it meanders along upper Ohio Street (Bentwood Avenue area) toward Moxham, gets its name from Samuel Adams, one of the first white men to settle in what is now Cambria County.

Grave site

Samuel Adams

1983

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JOHNSTOWN
TRIBUNE-DEMOCRAT Photo

Ernie

8 4½ x 6

6 faces
3 each

#10

The Geistown Juniors baseball team in 1915

By James W. Siehl

The "boys of summer" did things a little differently back in 1915 when the Geistown Juniors baseball team posed for the photo accompanying this Sesquicentennial Scrapbook chapter. Obviously, they believed in putting on their Sunday best for team pictures . . . unless you want to believe that baseball players 68 years ago wore dress shirts, ties, suits and the latest in masculine fedoras.

The lineup (left to right) includes: Front — Carl Keifer, Stanford Hershberger, George Hershberger and Franklin Miller. Back — Ira Hershberger, Lawrence Hershberger, Ralph Baumgardner, Cloyd Shaffer, Pete Engle and Frank Brandle.

Ira Hershberger, now 82 years old and residing in North Madison, Ohio, apparently is the only surviving member of the team, according to his sister, Erma Shoemaker of 2744 Bedford St., who loaned the photograph to the Richland Township Sesquicentennial historical committee.

Brothers

Ira and Stanford Hershberger were brothers. The other two Hershbergers in the photo also were brothers and cousins of Ira and Stanford, Mrs. Shoemaker said.

Reached by telephone at his Ohio home, Mr. Hershberger confirmed that the traditional baseball uniform had not made its appearance on the local sandlots. He remembered wearing everyday clothes and playing on a field in "Snakey Hollow."

And, of course, when the horsehide had been knocked off the ball, a coating of tape kept the sphere in play and the game in progress.

Admitting to being in pretty good health for "an old man," Mr. Hershberger said he still drives the distance from his home to Florida where he and his wife spend the winter months.

Scrapbook suggestion

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#11
5/24/83

Richland's boys went "Over There" during WW I

By James W. Siehl

Cryptic postcards with just enough lines to let the folks at home know a loved one's whereabouts. Photos of young men dressed in khaki, standing in front of a field tent wearing leggings and wide-brim hats.

The year was 1918, and once again the United States was at war — the Big One, the war to end all wars.

The bands were playing: "Over there. Over there. We're coming over. And, we won't be back until it's over — over there."

Spirits were high. Anticipation keen. Adventure. Love of country. Defender of the right. The boys were marching . . . marching . . .

Calvin Weaver

And there was trepidation, too. Wives and girl friends, mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers . . . fighting back the tears . . . swallowing hard. . . praying for their safe return.

Most of them did come back. But World War I in all its frightful reality came home to two Richland Township families, confirming their worst fears.

Killed in action — that dreaded military cable — arrived at the homes of Calvin Weaver and Charles Naugle.

17 on list

They are among 17 veterans from Richland Township who lost their lives answering freedom's ring in four military conflicts.

Calvin Weaver, son of a Mennonite farmer and minister, was killed in France, according to Donald G. Baumgardner of 300 Kerr Drive, a relative of the U. S. Doughboy.

Photos of Calvin and one of his letters are valued possessions of Mr. Baumgardner.

Pvt. Weaver and Charles Naugle, whose family lived in Walsall, a small mining community in the Krings area, were killed in the famous battle of the Argonne Forest.

According to Mr. Baumgardner, Calvin Weaver, against the wishes of his parents, the Rev. and Mrs. Alexander Weaver, insisted on signing up. Rev. Weaver was pastor of Weaver Mennonite Church.

In a letter addressed "Dear Sister And all the rest," dated Feb. 12, 1918, and "In France" as the only dateline, Pvt. Weaver wrote:

"I will try and ans. (sic) Mother's letter rec.d (sic) today, not having wrote you any letter for a long time. So I will write you one tonight. I did not write one Sunday. Was too busy.

"General Pershing inspected us on Sunday. So that kept us busy. So I will answer my letters this week in the evening.

"Mother said George Marsh was home on a furlough over Xmas. He was a good friend of mine while I used to run to Scalp Level. He is in the Navy. Did he say anthing how he likes it in the Navy?

"So much for that.

"How is the weather in the States now. You must have had a hard winter, the way all the letters read. The most snow we had over here where I am at was about . . . well no more than five inches. And we did not mind the cold but have been working hard all winter. We are having fine weather now.

"Well I must close for this time."

According to Mr. Baumgardner, Calvin Weaver and Mr. Baumgardner's mother, Louella, were brother and sister. The immediate family also included brothers John, Charles and Harry and sisters Mary and Fanny.

1 survives

Only Mary (Brumbaugh) survives. Now 84, she lives in Brighton, N. Y.

Mr. Baumgardner telephoned his aunt Monday and was told that Calvin Weaver was killed in July — about five months after the above letter was written. He was 21.

Calvin is the Weaver honored in the Hunter-Weaver Post, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Scalp Level, organization.

They gave their lives

Seventeen young men from the Richland Township community are remembered for their ultimate sacrifice. They gave their lives in the cause of freedom.

Killed in World War I were Calvin Weaver and Charles Naugle.

The World War II toll includes Jack Wainwright, Andrew Emery, Harry E. Hancock, Thomas A. Rubritz, Walter Wentz, Louis Allenbaugh, Michael Ola, Clarance Slagle, Fran R. Younker and David Bheam.

Killed in Korea was 1st. Lt. Richard E. Roberts.

The others died in Vietnam. They include Pfc. Jerry W. Siegrist, Pfc. Stanley A. Stys, Lance Cpl. Reed M. May Jr. and Spec. 4 Greg L. Hagins.

A postcard from a Doughboy

#12

Richland High's Girl Reserves are remembered

By James W. Siehl

Dressed in their white middie tops, pleated skirts, white stockings and Copenhagen blue ties, the Girl Reserves of Richland High School were a distinctive group back in 1926-27 when the accompanying photo was taken in front of the Geistown building.

One of the members, Mary Katherine Dravis, now the wife of Rudolph Leffler of Meadow Drive, Johnstown R. D. 5, said the unit had been organized by Miss Khlare of the Johnstown YWCA.

She remembered tea parties to which mothers of the members and women teachers at the school also were invited.

"Mostly, we received training in etiquette," Mrs. Leffler recalled. "We made floral bouquets and artificial crabapples and gave them to shut-ins."

According to Mrs. Leffler, the majority also were members of the Glee Club, which included both sexes.

Margaret Stull, included in the photo, also was the singing director in addition to serving as an adviser.

Hit songs

"The two hit songs of the Glee Club that year were "Glow Worm" and "Capt. Jinks of the Horse Marines," Mrs. Leffler said. "The first was rendered ever so softly, and the latter with great gusto, especially by the boys."

The Girl Reserves were short-lived — in comparison with the Glee Club, Mrs. Leffler said.

The members (left to right) of the Girl Reserves were:

Front — Alma Brumbaugh, Virginia Oldham, Violet Blough, Sara Smith and Mary Hershberger.

Center — First girl unidentified, Flornell Helman, Mary Frye, teacher Margaret Stull, Beatrice Gindlesberger, Zella Weaver and Thelma Dutton.

Back — Dolores Rubritz, Ethel Crawford, Esther Hostetler, Mary Katherine Dravis and Irene Frye.

The Girl Reserves

Scrapbook suggestion

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#13

One-room Blough School in Richland remembered

By James W. Siehl

The accompanying poem was written by Ortha Weaver in 1920 for the enjoyment of the pupils he had taught in the one-room Blough School along Luray Avenue.

It was customary then for teachers to present a small booklet to the boys and girls at the end of the school term. It included a photograph of the teacher, the names of the students, poetry and other messages of inspirational worth.

Coincidentally, an Ortha Weaver is among the children posing for a 1912 Blough School class photo which appears on this page.

In one of the booklets, Grant Weaver, also a teacher at the Blough School, addressed the following message to his 1918 pupils:

"Dear Pupil:

"This little memento is of slight value now, but if you find it among other keepsakes in years to come, it will prove to be a treasured possession reminding you of friends who helped to mold your character and career.

"I hope that you will look back on this school year as a bright spot in your life. My best wishes go with you."

The first Blough School was situated a couple of hundred yards up from Luray Avenue's junction with Belmont Street. It was closed in 1917, according to Nyle Hershberger, who is researching Richland's school history as part of the township's 150th birthday observance.

The Blough students moved into a new building, which although not in use for school purposes, is still an occupied structure at Parker Road and Kring Street. It was closed as a school in the mid-30s.

Those who attended one-room school houses recall that having a group picture taken was an important occasion.

It called for dressing up, as is evidenced by the suits and ties worn by the boys and the becoming long dresses by the girls in the 1912 class photo.

Although the location for the picture has not been pinpointed, considering their dress the distance likely was not far from the school.

Judging from the numerous rocks in the foreground and mountain laurel in the background, an educated guess would be the nearby ravine where Sam's Run begins its descent into Moxham.

The historical committee has identified those in the 1912 photo (left to right) as follows:

Front — Two Ferrier brothers, Alvin Weaver, Mabel Weaver, Mabel Helman, Pauline Helman, Edith Hayes, Sarah Parker, Beatrice Parker, Doris Constable, Neva Harrison and Jessie Czeck.

Center — John Parker, Thomas Charles Hancock and Mabel Constable.

Back — Ortha Weaver, Daryl Hayes, Charles Parker, Foster Hayes, Harry Kimmel, Warren Weaver, Rose Parker, Bessie Hayes and Louella Shetler, teacher.

A Richland man, who still resided only a few houses away from the former Blough School at Parker Road and Kring Street, remembers how it was attending the school.

"There were six rows in one room," he said. "Each of the rows designated one of the grades. And, there was one teacher for all the grades. She would tell one row what to do, and while they were doing it she would move on to another row. She really had a job. I don't know how she survived."

Because there was so much to do, the teacher would assign jobs to various boys and girls.

"She really needed help," the Richland man recalled.

Discipline wasn't much of a problem in those days. Otherwise, nothing could have been accomplished, he added.

"If somebody did misbehave, she didn't do any whipping," he continued. "She would have the child sit in a chair in a corner before the whole class."

Silent bell

The school bell will not ring tomorrow,
It is the last day of the year;
Feelings both of joy and sorrow,
For the parting time is here.

Another year of study ended,
Problems solved and lessons learned;
School work for the while suspended,
And a good vacation earned.

Where were life and speech and singing,
Emptiness will reign instead;
Ceased the school-bells noisy ringing;
Hushed and still as if 'twere dead.

Though you greet vacation gladly,
Happy that your tasks are 'oer;
Time will come when mem'ry sadly,
Reviews the days that are no more.

Friendships formed in days of youth,
Are those which linger in the mind;
And school's the very place in truth,
Where one forms friendships of that kind.

When 20, 30 years shall pass,
And season follows season 'round;
Perhaps some member of this class,
With fame and honor will be crowned.

What pride will swell your bosom then,
If one of you should glory win;
To say among your fellowmen,
I used to go to school with him.

May all of you in years to come,
Look fondly back upon this year;
As one in which the total sum,
Of all your life will stand out clear.

Scrapbook suggestion

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#14

Richland Township has an agricultural heritage

By James W. Siehl

Hard-working people, abundant water and rich soil combined to establish Richland Township as an agriculture community in its early years.

The resourceful farmers met their own needs in their usual self-reliant style. There was a grist mill here, cider press, dairy farms and a blacksmith.

Inflation was an unknown word at the turn of the century.

In 1832, a year before Richland formally became a township, beef was selling for 3 cents a pound; pork, for 3½ cents a pound; eggs, 9 cents a dozen. Twenty cents was the going price for three chickens.

Fifty-four years later, in 1886, money was still scarce. Farm hands worked long hours for 60 cents a day.

The early farm history includes some legendary battles with the weather.

Gleaned from Shetler's "Two Centuries of Struggle and Growth," a history of Mennonite churches in the area, is an account of "The Year of the Big Frost or the Buckwheat year."

A heavy frost took place June 4, 1859. It killed all the fruit, rye, wheat, potatoes, corn and garden vegetables.

Panic-stricken farmers made a wild raid on the grist mills to purchase flour for the coming winter. The price on flour leaped to $18 a barrel from $8.

The one crop which could still be raised was buckwheat. Large areas were sown and the yield was bountiful — hence the name, "The Great Buckwheat Year."

In 1927, the farmers experienced the frustation of frost every month of the year.

The women

It was natural that farm women for purposes of social enjoyment and common interests would get together.

From such meetings sprang the Richland Society of Farm Women, an organization which marked its 50th anniversary 15 years ago with a special program at the Colonial Church of the Brethren in Moxham.

Richland's image as a burgeoning residential area and rapidly expanding industrial site is comparatively new in its 150-year-old history.

One of the two photos in this week's Sesquicentennial Scrapbook series underlines just how fast that transition from rural to suburban life has taken place.

It features the Cloyd Hostetler farmhouse and pond, which many people will remember seeing on ground now occupied by the Richland Bowl along Frances Street, a block of Scalp Avenue.

The bowling center opened Sept. 1, 1961. At a cost of $160,000, it was built by the late Isadore "Naz" Mishler of 1101 Tener St., who had operated the Red Top Markets on the hill.

Cloyd Hostetler, also deceased, had inherited the farm from his father, Stephen Hostetler, who got the land from Hiram Weaver.

The photo of the old farmhouse is the property of Miriel Hostetler, Cloyd's widow, who now resides in Indiana County.

The other picture, provided by Wilbur Wertz of 2113 Bertmin St., was taken in the early 1930's on what now is the Little League baseball field at the rear of the former Geistown School, Lamberd Avenue.

As members of the Richland Township Society of Farm Women, Group 2, the women formed a chorus which put on minstrels and performed in churches and at conventions and various farm-women functions.

From left to right, the chorus included:

Front — Violet Luther, Lydia Belle Caldwell, Violet Ashbridge, Gladys Smouse, Rose Thomas, Mrs. Cloyd Gindlesperger, Lillie Longwill, Ruth Gohn, Edna Gaston, Florence Kinzey, Kara Wertz and Mabel Gindlesberger.

Back — Elsie Shaffer, Anna Helman, Pansy Gaston, Julia Schaller, Lillie Wineland, Mary Baumgardner, Esther Blough, Margaret Parker, Hilda Kinzey, Elizabeth Lees, Pauline Wire, Grace Wertz and Edith Miller, director.

Charter members of the Richland Society of Farm Women in attendance at the 50th anniversary celebration included Mary Baumgardner, Edna Gaston, Rosella Shaw and Trella Wingard.

Mrs. Wingard was the first vice president of the society and Mrs. Shaw, the first secretary.

Two past state presidents from the Richland society were honored with program listings. They included Mrs. Franklin Miller, 1940-43, and Mrs. Waldo Gohn, 1952-55.

Others honored

Honored also were these county presidents:

Mrs. R. M. Luther, Mrs. George M. Wertz, Mrs. Alonza Baumgardner, Mrs. J. C. Helman, Ruth Gohn, Florence Shaffer, Hazel Shrader and Hanna Bender.

The 1967-68 officers included Anna D. Weaver, president; Myrtle Hunt, vice president; Violet Luther, secretary; Geneva Blough, financial secretary; and Hazel Shrader, treasurer.

The farm women

Hostetler farmland

Scrapbook suggestion

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#15

Weaver Mennonites roots run deep

By James W. Siehl

As the first church in Richland Township, the roots of Weaver Mennonite Church dig deep into the past — even before the formal organization of this rural community as a municipality in 1833.

The current church structure along Scalp Avenue, near the site of the former Church Grove School, has been standing 105 years. However, its history dates back much farther — probably as much as 175 years.

The first services were held in a log schoolhouse built on the same parcel of ground known as the Schoolhouse Lot. It was deeded by James Sharkey May 7, 1817, to Christian Lehman and Jacob Whetstone, trustees.

At the right are Louisa and Hiram Weaver (a former pastor). The couple at the left were not identified.

Met in homes

But before that, as was the custom in those early times, religious meetings probably were being conducted in the homes of the hard-working people.

Because no minister was available, services in the log schoolhouse were held about every four weeks when one of the preachers of the Blough Mennonite Church in Somerset County journeyed some 10 miles, usually on horseback, to lead the congregation.

Putting the church in perspective with the early history of Cambria County, the first white inhabitants of the region now known as Richland Township were the Adams family, who settled here in 1769.

Rachel legend

According to lore, Rachel Hill, close to the Weaver church, was named for Rachel Adams who was massacred at that spot by Indians on their last great uprising in western Pennsylvania.

Just a short distance to the northwest in the Valley of the Conemaugh, Joseph Schantz, an Amishman and the first of his tradition to settle in what is now Cambria County, purchased a large tract of ground at the site of the old Indian village of Connumah.

In 1800, Schantz laid out a city which later was named after him, Schantztown (Johnstown). It is the only city of its size that has ever been founded or named after an Amishman or a Mennonite.

The Dunkards

The Dunkards, the Amish and the Mennonites formed the vanguard of settlers who risked confrontation with the Indians to settle the wild region west of the Alleghenies. They began to trickle into the region in the early 1760's.

It was a unique kind of pioneering that won the trust of the Indians. These men of peace used no firearm to protect themselves — only their good will.

While it is not known who the first Mennonite settlers were, it is recorded that shortly before 1800 the Weavers, Baumgardners, Keims and Bloughs bought land in this area.

Later settlers

Later, settlers included the names of Lehman, Whetstone, Yoder, Wingard and Luther.

Just where they came from is not clear, but most likely from settlements to the south on the "Somerset side" of the Stonycreek, according to information gleaned from "Two Centuries of Struggle and Growth," a history of the Allegheny Mennonite Conference." It was written by Bishop Sanford G. Shetler, former pastor of Stahl and Pleasant Grove Mennonite churches and principal of Johnstown Mennonite School.

In typical Mennonite fashion, the rich farm land was developed rapidly and substantial farm buildings were erected. Mennonite farms once spread over an area of quite a few miles surrounding the church.

Long pattern

This pattern remained unchanged for nearly 100 years. The first change came in the early 1900's when the local coal companies began to buy up the land. Many people had to leave their homesteads. In many cases, the removal of the coal changed or stopped the flow of water from the numerous springs, making the land less desireable.

Then came urbanization. With the City of Johnstown and its suburbs pushing out farther and farther, picturesque farms gave way to building lots and streets. The pretty, rural Weaver church, which once stood like a sentinel in the midst of lush farm land, had become a street number.

Member ordained

Retracing the history of Weaver congregation, in 1854 Samuel Blough, one of its members, was ordained to the ministry. The next year, the congregation built its own house of worship. It was 30 by 36 feet, of log construction, and was erected near the old schoolhouse. It became known as Weaver Mennonite Church.

By 1878 the membership had outgrown the capacity of the log building and the existing 40-by-50-foot structure was built.

A dollar went a long way in those days. Minutes from a 1911 meeting reveal that two sheds for the minister's rigs were erected for $18. A new system of acetylene lighting was installed in 1914 and the old oil lamps were sold for $2.50 and $1.

Electricity Came

In 1921, electric lights replaced the old acetylene lights. A major remodeling job was done in 1923 at a cost of $2,629.

After Samuel Blough was ordained bishop in 1878, the church took on new impetus. Sunday School and evening meetings were established. Sermons were preached in English rather than in the traditional German language.

After Bishop Blough's death in 1883, the church was without a resident minister for 10 years.

Other pastors

John Henry Blough, son of the bishop, served the church as pastor a short time. He was followed by the Rev. Alexander Weaver, who was ordained in 1893 and served seven years.

Then for many years the ministry consisted of Alexander Weaver, Hiram Wingard, D. S. Yoder and Levi H. Weaver.

The Weaver church may have been the first in the area to have a music program with a regularly elected chorister. For a number of years, it served as the only vacation Bible School in the Richland area. Peak attendance was reached in 1933 with 151 enrolled.

Mission site

In 1937, Weaver church supported a mission outreach at Headrick, a small community north of Johnstown.

In 1945, W. C. Hershberger moved here and took an active part in the ministry at Weaver church, assisting Hiram Wingard who had served as pastor for 30 years.

Clarence Alwine was ordained in 1947 to serve in the Weaver and Headrick churches. In 1950, Harold E. Thomas was ordained as minister. With the death a few years later of Mr. Hershberger and Mr. Weaver, the church leadership was left largely to the

Churches merge

In 1969, the Pleasant Grove Mennonite Church at Elton merged with the Weaver church.

In July 1972, Harry Y. Shetler became the pastor at Weaver church.

Currently, the congregation is headed by the Rev. Kurt M. Horst.

The Mennonite heritage goes back to Europe with an Anabaptist movement in the 16th century, which was part of the larger Protestant Reformation.

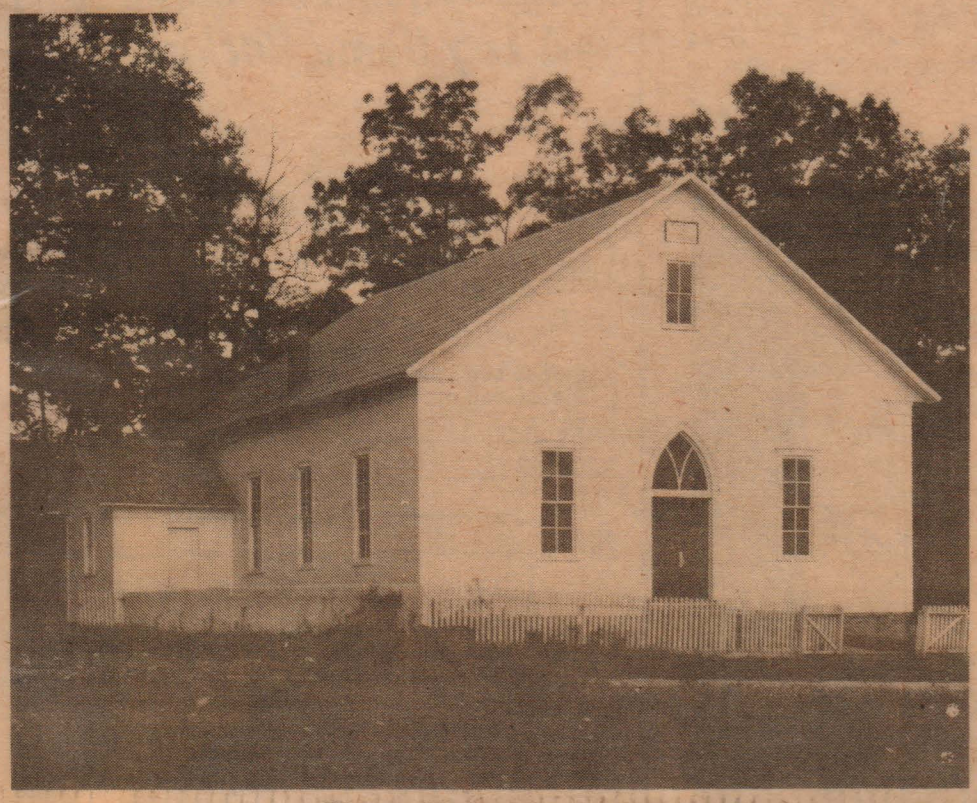
In Zurich, Switzerland, in 1525, Conrad Grebel and others organized a group of Brethren on the principles which still mark the Mennonites as a distinct group.

Sought freedom

Because of persecution by the state and churchmen whose religious views differed sharply, Mennonites along with other religious groups sought freedom of worship in the New World.

At the invitation of William Penn, founder of the colony known as "Penn's Woods" (Pennsylvania), a group of Mennonite colonists settled there with the Quakers. The ship "Concord" left Holland in 1683, and landed Oct. 6 of that year in Philadelphia.

The Germantown settlement (north Philadelphia) marks the beginning of the Mennonites of America.



Weaver Mennonite Church

Scrapbook suggestion

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#16

Richland 'farmed' coal in the good old days

By James W. Siehl

Entwined with Richland Township's early history as an agriculture community was the development of small coal-mining communities. They became known as Walsall, Mine 37 and Krings.

David W. Samuel Jr. of 625 Belmont Ave., a descendant of the European immigrants who came here to work the mines, has taken a special interest in this Sesquicentennial Scrapbook feature.

Mr. Samuel, a retired history teacher in the Richland School District, spent his youth in Walsall. His father mined coal and his grandfather, Conrad Kunkle, was one of the early settlers of this part of the township.

When it began

According to Mr. Samuel's research, mining of soft coal in western Pennsylvania began in 1759. Its use in industry had started 29 years earlier when Abraham Dudley successfully applied a process of smelting iron with coal instead of charcoal.

However, the industrial use of coal didn't accelerate until improvements in the smelting process were introduced in 1828.

This led to the forming of steel-producing companies. One of them was the Lorain Steel Co., a forerunner of the U. S. Steel Corp.'s operation in Moxham.

Early portal

In the early 1890's, Lorain Steel opened a portal in a beautifully wooded section of Richland Township. The steel company called it Ingleside Mine. The collection of houses that sprang up to provide homes for the miners and their families became the village of Walsall — named after a Welsh town of the same name.

Besides Wales, the ancestors of the present inhabitants of these mining communities came from Germany, Austria, Hungary, Slovenia, England and Italy.

10-hour days

Miners worked 10-hour days on a day shift. Since there was no electricity, the men illuminated work areas with torch lamps. They burned coal oil in the lamps, and fitted them on their caps. Later, the miners relied on carbide lamps.

Explaining the early mining operation at Ingleside, Mr. Samuel said a "drift" was cut to the "B" seam — sometimes called the Miller seam. It measured about 40 to 42 inches in thickness.

Coal was transported to the outside over a main heading. The men would drill into the rock and then shoot it with dynamite to provide sufficient height for mules or ponies to enter and pull out the coal.

Coal 'rooms'

Working off the main heading in "rooms," the miners would push the coal into the main passageway to be hauled to the outside.

Entrance to Mine 37

Later, when electricity became available, electric motors were used to haul the coal.

Since there always was a danger of gas pockets, large fans were used for ventilation. Air was directed to the miners through strategic use of canvas in the main heading and adjoining back heading. Most of the men contracted black lung, a dreaded miner's disease caused by coal dust coating the lungs.

In the days of no electricity, getting the coal from the mouth of the Ingleside Mine to the Baltimore & Ohio railroad right away required a bit of American ingenuity.

Getting it out

The coal had to be lowered down an incline about an eighth of a mile to be weighed and dumped into railroad cars for transportation to Lorain Steel.

This was accomplished with the use of a large pulley, which efficiently lowered loaded coal cars down the slope to the tipple while at the same time pulling empty cars back up the hill.

The speed and stoppage of the coal car was regulated by a large drum with a big wooden brake on it. Tragically, two miners — Daniel Wertz and Thomas Heffley — were killed when the mine pulley gave way.

One of the accompanying photos depicts one of the coal cars used in the pulley system. It was taken in 1917.

Mr. Samuel's father and uncle are in the picture. From left, the trio includes George Shuman, Joseph Samuel and David Samuel Sr.

Served with king

An Englishman, who served in the British Navy from 1877 to 1882 with King George V of England (before his crowning), was responsible for opening the Ingleside Mine.

He was William Thomas Moss, who was born Feb. 22, 1861, in Cornwall. Mr. Moss came to the United States in 1883 and settled in South Fork. There he became well known as a bandsman and musician, organizing the South Fork Band.

Mr. Moss was residing in Johnstown Borough at the time of the 1889 flood. A short time later he moved to Walsall to open the mine for Arthur J. Moxham, who was in charge of the Lorain Steel plant.

In an accompanying photo, Mr. Moss (in dress hat and coat) had his picture taken with a group of blackfaced miners. It was payday at Ingleside — always a festive occation.

Others in the photo were identified (left to right) as follows:

Front — William Meske, Fred Rodda, Tom Miller, Blair Blough, Fred Warshel and Gotleib Kollack.

Back — Herman Dignats, Mr. Mosgo, Levi Eash, Mr. Moss, Fred Warshel, Steve Tetonigh, Steve Sheets, George Cooper and Mr. Cupish.

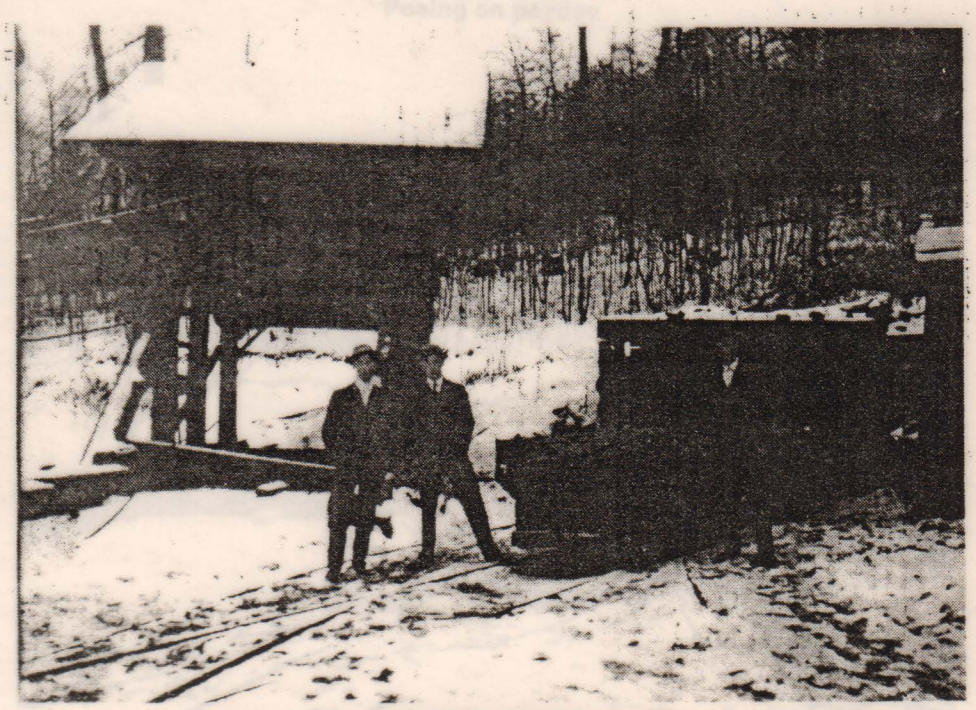
Long career

For 26 years, Mr. Moss served as superintendent of the mine. He left the company to form his own independent coal company.

Dorothy Caldwell of 1239 Lydia Drive, widow of Fred Caldwell, brings back memories with a photo of a group of men at the Mine 37 entrance. Her late husband's father, Ralph Caldwell, is pictured with them.

Ralph Caldwell had managed the company-owned Eureka Store in Mine 37 shortly after the turn of the century. Mr. Caldwell is third from the right in the photo.

Posing on payday



Ingenious machine

Scrapbook suggestion

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#17

Coal miners built their cottages in Walsall

By James W. Siehl

When the Lorain Steel Co. in Moxham opened its Ingleside coal mine in Richland Township in the early 1890's, it was only natural that people came to work the mine.

Mostly European immigrants, they cleared the forested mountainside on the northern side of the Stonycreek River, which also forms the southern boundary of Cambria County and Richland Township.

A line of modest dwellings began stringing out on high ground running along a steep hillside overlooking the river and the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad tracks below.

Some still there

Some of those properties still may be seen, but one must leave the beaten path if they wish to visit the village of Walsall. Since the construction of Eisenhower Boulevard, motorists unfamiliar with local history speed along the heavily used artery beween Scalp Avenue and Krings unaware of the former road below them. The new road construction cut through the old route near the bottom of the hill, bisecting the village and leaving Walsall properties on both sides of the highway.

Look for sign

For those who enjoy a look into the past, a sign, "Old Walsall Road," marks the entrance to this old line section of the township.

Much more conspicuous is the once attractive old redbrick Walsall school building, which readily may be observed from Eisenhower Boulevard. Now in use as a residence, the structure was the second school built in Walsall.

Its predecessor was a frame building situated on the site of the current Voice of Calvary Church (Pentecostal). Although it looks much like the old school house, it is not the same building, according to David W. Samuel, retired Richland school teacher and former resident of Walsall who has provided much insight into the village's former times.

Lots of gardens

Mr. Samuel remembers that most Walsall families had small gardens and raised chickens. He said folks could buy groceries at two small stores operated by Mrs. Hern and Mr. and Mrs. Rodda.

In contrast with houses in Mine 37, which were owned by the Berwind-White Coal Mining Co., as well as the only store, the people of Walsall and Krings owned their own homes, Mr. Samuel said.

Since the coal mined at Ingleside and Mine 37 was chiefly for the steel mills, there were many house-coal mines owned by individuals in the Walsall area to provide fuel for heating their homes. The people used coal in heating stoves, generally found in the parlor, and in cooking stoves.

Family mines

Among families with their own house-coal mines were Thomas Simmons, Gotlieb Kollak, Thomas Haughton, Howard Dutton, Conrad Kunkle, Fred Warshel, William Jeschonek, William Meske and A. S. Nowell.

In those early years, there were no churches in Walsall or Mine 37. But in 1924, the First Christian Church of downtown Johnstown sponsored a Sunday school at the Walsall schoolhouse. About 30 people (mostly young folks) attended.

Motivated by common needs, the early Walsall inhabitants banded together for big community projects. By hand, according to Mr. Samuel, they dug and placed a waterline from the Arbutus section to Walsall — a distance of about a mile and a quarter. The water was purchased from the Wilmore Water Company.

Poles for power

In order to get electricity, the villagers agreeed to install the supporting poles. They erected a mile of timber, and the Pennsylvania Electric Company strung the wire. It was the end of an era for Walsall. Kerosene lamps had become obsolete.

Mr. Samuel recalled that people of means constructed beautiful homes near the Ingleside Mine.

They were erected by people named Rodda (Charles), Marks, Somerson, Favorite, Eash (Levi), Brown, Swank, Marsh, Nowell (A. S. and Lee) and Thomas Heffley, Mr. Samuel remembered.

A sewage-treatment facility now covers much of that area.

Pumping station

His recollections also take in a pumping station at Ingleside, where oil was pumped over the mountains to the eastern shore, and of B & O passenger trains stopping twice a day to pick up and discharge passengers at Ingleside.

Those were the days when the mail carrier used a horse and buggy to make his appointed rounds.

Scrapbook suggestion

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This fine home also served as the Walsall postoffice when the photo was taken in about 1870. In those days, postoffices were established in neighborhood residences. Sitting on the porch are Wilham Rodda and his wife, Mary. On the steps (left to right) are their sons, Fred and Charles. Their daughter, Bess, who later married Tobias Wingard, also is in the family picture. Both Wilham and Mary died of diphtheria. The house then was occupied by William and Hilda Davey, immigrants from England. The property still stands. It has been renovated and is now the home of the John Basko family.

The historical committee for Richland Township's sesquicentennial observance is indebted to the memory of an 87-year old township resident, Rose Moss Edwards, for the identification of these Walsall School classmates. The photo was taken about 1900. Rose's father, William Moss, opened the Ingleside Mine for the Lorain Steel Co. shortly after the 1889 Flood. Mrs. Edwards, who still lives in Walsall, was uncertain as to the name of her teacher (back row, left). She thought it was Mr. Helsel. The boys and girls (left to right) are: Front — Savila Eash, Rose Moss, Mary Mark, Susan Orris, Anna Mozgo, Charles Mozgo, Louise Moss and Norbert Eash. Center — Anna Naugle, Elizabeth Naugle, Carrie Eash, Elvie Orris, John Mark, Emma Eash, Nettie Orris, Nora Sheets, Charles Naugle (killed in World War I), Emma Orris, Mary Miller, Bertha Novisher and Margaret Eash. Back — Margaret Haupt, Tony Mallon, Fred Younga, Agnes Kunkle (David W. Samuel Jr.'s mother), Emma Sheets, Teresa Haupt, Amelia Novisher, Bill Kunkle, Bill Meske, Grace Doubt and a visitor.

#18

A historic look at the Walsall community

Photo by Dean Maxwell

The Walsall GBU

This Walsall Branch of the German Beneficial Union, established by German immigrants, was one of the forerunners of a social organization which today is nationwide with clubs in every state in the union. The house in the background is the Charles Deitke homestead. The property was used as a GBU meeting place for many years until torn down when a new road was built through the small coal mining community. It was replaced with a new structure in Windber. Walsall is located in Richland Township on heights above the Stonycreek River adjacent to Eisenhower Boulevard. During World War II, the GBU changed its name to Greater Beneficial Union due to resentment of the German war machine. Joseph Boerstler of 710 Belmont St., for 27 years president of the Moxham GBU, Bridge Street, noted that the GBU initially was formed to provide insurance benefits. Policies continue to be available. This photo is owned by Fred Burbulla, who as a child is included in the picture, along with his father and maternal grandparents. Mr. Burbulla, a retired miner, still resides in Walsall. The group (left to right) includes: Bottom — Tony Deitke, Bill Deitke, Louise Kollak, William Kollak, Paul Kollak, Gotlieb Kollak, August Casper, Tony Jacobs, Arthur Jacobs and Frank Deitke. Center — Lizzie Rush, Mrs. Gotfried Rush, Mrs. Caroline Younga (Mr. Burbulla's grandmother), Anna Younga, Anna Jacobs and Fred Burbulla (child). Back — First man unidentified, William Casper, Gotfried Rush, August Younga (Mr. Burbulla's grandfather), Charles Deitke, William Burbulla (Fred Burbulla's father) and Julius Jacobs, Spanish-American War veteran.

The past depicted

A portion of Walsall's historic past has been preserved in this painting by Helen C. (Burbulla) Boyd of Johnstown R. D. 3. Mrs. Boyd (above), a descendant of the people who established the coal mining village, had only to go up into the woods behind her house in Walsall for this interesting subject. The painting depicts what is left of an old blacksmith shop and motor barn used at the Ingleside Mine operated by the former Lorain Steel Company for its plant in Moxham. Attached to a drum and cable, coal cars were lowered down the steep hillside to the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad for shipment. The painting is on display at the Highland Community Library, Luray Avenue.

Arbor Day in Walsall

Sixty-five years ago in 1918, it was Arbor Day and the boys and girls at Walsall School were marking the occasion by planting trees. The woman walking by is Caroline Younga, a Walsall resident. The one-room structure was the second school in Walsall, replacing a building at Eisenhower Boulevard and Mine 37 Road. An attractive red brick school house, no longer in use, was the third Walsall School. Now occupied as a residence, it may be seen from Eisenhower Boulevard.

Bridge strollers

All decked out in their Sunday best, these residents of Walsall capped a scenic stroll by having their picture taken on this structural steel bridge (since replaced), which at that time crossed Paint Creek a short distance from where the mountain stream flows into the Stonycreek River. David Samuel, retired Richland school teacher and former Walsall resident, provided the photo which was taken in the early 1900's. Mr. Samuel's aunt, Nora Kunkle, is the fourth person from left.The only other person identified is Amelia Novisher (kneeling), third from left.

#19

The good old summertime in Richland Township

Enjoying summertime outings

These photos should bring back memories of summertime in the good old days in Richland Township for longtime residents. They span a time frame from the early 1900s to the '40s and '50s — during a period when a ride on a street car to Windber, South Fork or Ebensburg was somebody's idea of a Sunday drive. The group of young people enjoying a summer outing was photographed by Charles Rodda of Walsall. It is believed the photo was taken in Miller's chestnut grove sometime after the turn of the century. The grove was situated on a hill above Eisenhower Boulevard in an area in which the trees were removed and the land stripmined not long ago. The photo is the property of David Samuel, former Walsall resident. At the extreme right are Mr. Samuel's late parents, David Samuel Sr. and Agnes Kunkle. The cute little cowgirl riding her hobby horse in the photograph at right is Edna Hostetler, sister of the late Cloyd Hostetler. The picture was loaned to the township sesquicentennial historical committee by Cloyd Hostetler's widow, Muriel, who now resides in Indiana.

Scrapbook suggestion

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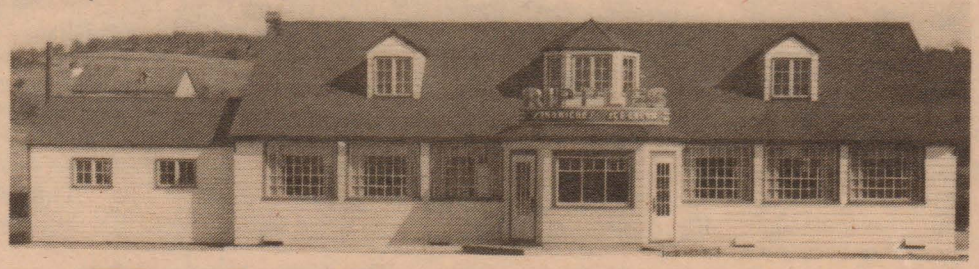
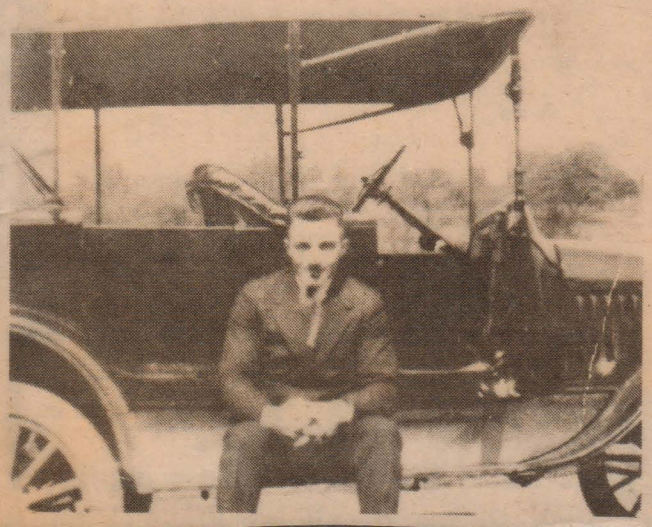


Ripple's Restaurant

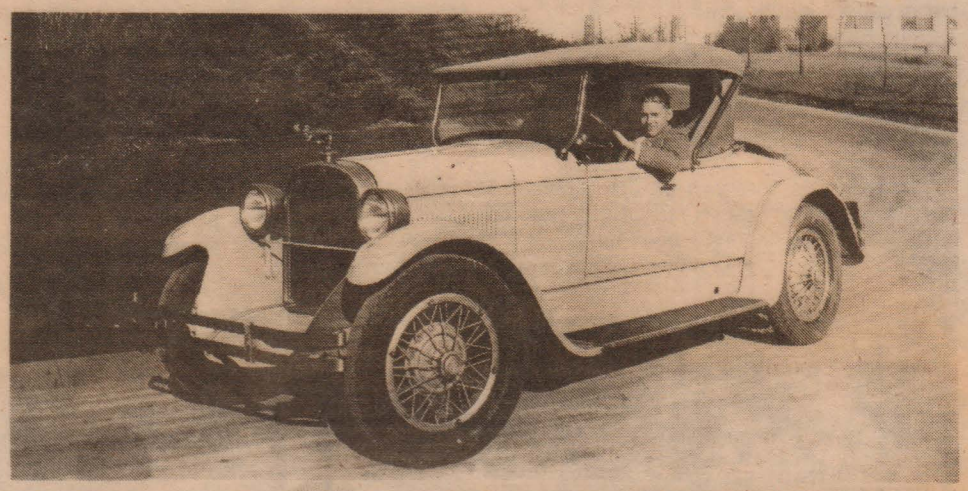
You don't have to be a senior citizen to recognize this former business place along Scalp Avenue — now the location of the Howard Johnson Restaurant. Of course, it's Ripple's Restaurant. For a couple of decades, it was THE place to go for barbecues, milkshakes and cokes as a favorite "hangout" for the teen-agers.

Texts by James W. Siehl



Vintage autos

Donald G. Baumgardner of 300 Kerr Drive furnished the historical committee with these two photos featuring old automobiles. His father, Grant Baumgardner, is sitting on a running board of a 1919 Ford touring car. The vehicle was owned by Harry Lehman. Information on the other picture is incomplete. It was suggested the model could be a 1925 Chrysler.



#20

Route 56, Richland's main artery, is rich in history

By James W. Siehl

Route 56 in Richland Township, featured in one of the accompanying landscapes in this week's Sesquicentennial Scrapbook chapter, has a storied past.

Originally, it was part of the Bedford Trail — one of the main trails west from Fort Bedford.

It came through Windber, Richland Township, Geistown, the Oakland section of Stonycreek Township and joined the Stoystown path at Von Lunen Road and continued west to the Frankstown Road.

The Quemahoning path divided at Stoystown and followed the Stony Creek river west, going through Riverside, Moxham and then following the Von Lunen Road to Bedford Street — and junction with the Bedford Trail.

Travel arduous

The early settlers found travel arduous. In addition to worrying about Indian attacks, they had to contend with dense forests and rough terrain. The means of travel first was on foot or horseback and then by covered wagon, followed by stage coach.

Before being designated as a state artery, Route 56 was known by various names — including Bedford Pike, Geistown Pike and the Windber Road.

Eventually, about 1815, trails such as Bedford and Stoystown were established as turnpikes or toll roads because there were no means for their maintenance.

Toll gates were set up at distances ranging from two to five miles. The going rate for a horse and rider as well as for a yoke of oxen was 6½ cents at each toll gate. The owner of a two-wheeled cart had to pay 12½ cents. If a cart was drawn by four horses, the cost was 37½ cents.

The state legislature did not become actively involved in building good roads until 1926 when the Sproul Act proposed a state system on the theory that the highways should connect the county seats.

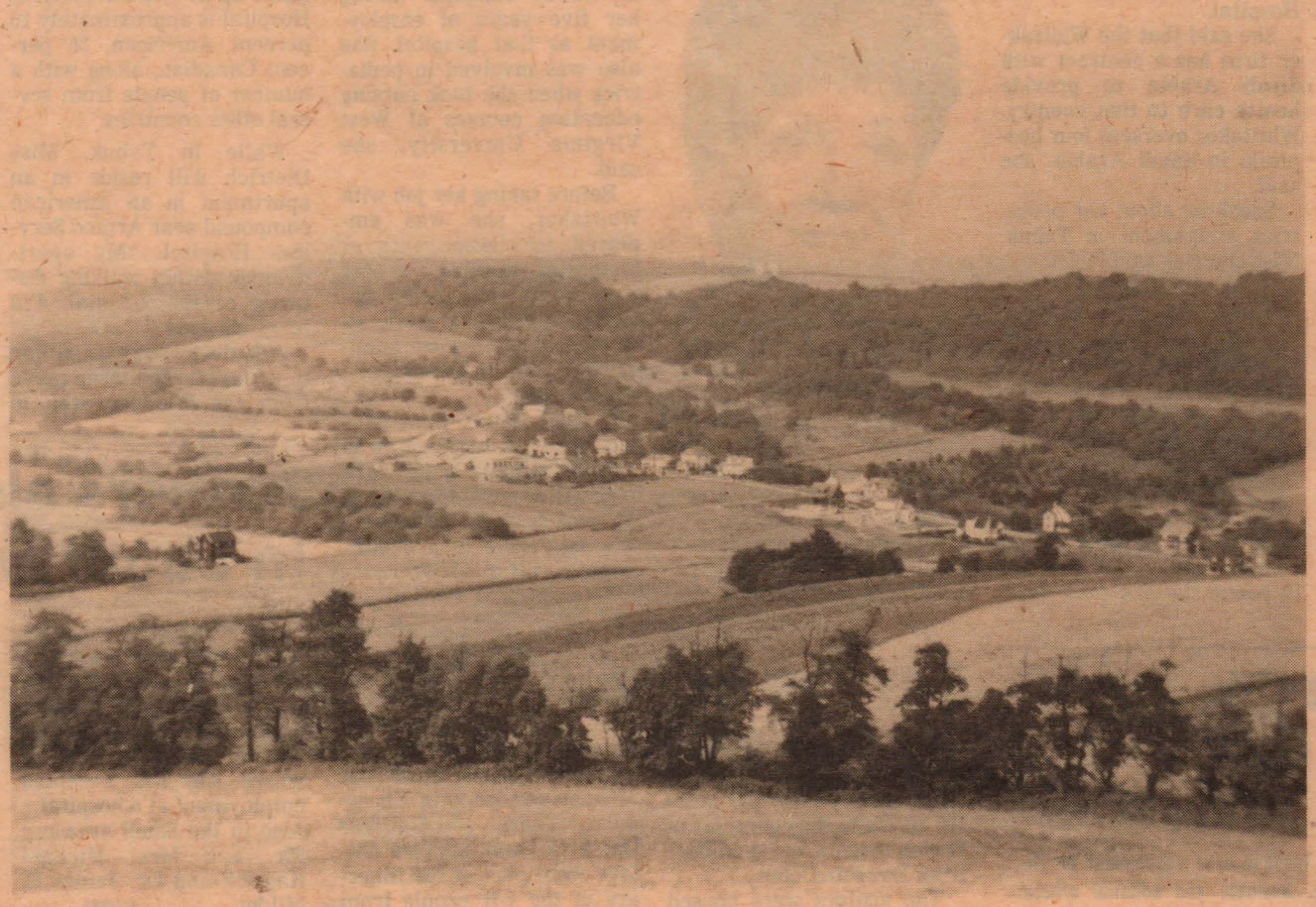
Questions of how the roads were to be financed and who was to decide which roads were to be built first were the basis of considerable political squabbling.

"Jungle Road"

A macadam road up Constable Hollow (Lorain Borough) from Moxham, as an example, was dubbed the "Jungle Road" and was denounced as a waste of public funds in a wilderness.

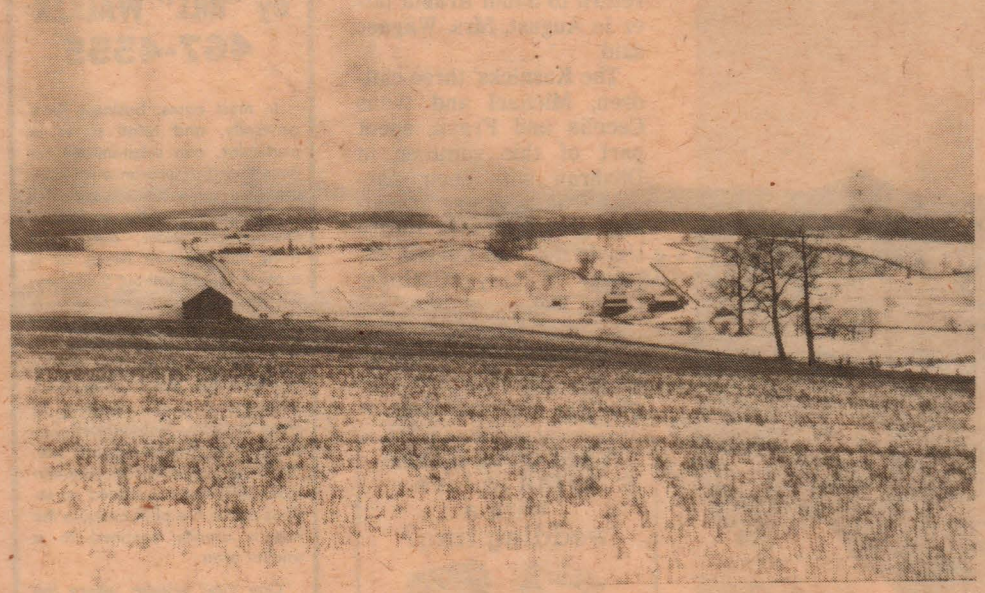
As noted in Gable's "History of Cambria County":

"The state had but small revenues applicable to good roads and could borrow no money by issuing bonds without first amending the Constitution. Local taxes everywhere were being increased. Good roads were greatly to be desired, but good roads seemed to be safely locked up with the pearly gates of Paradise."



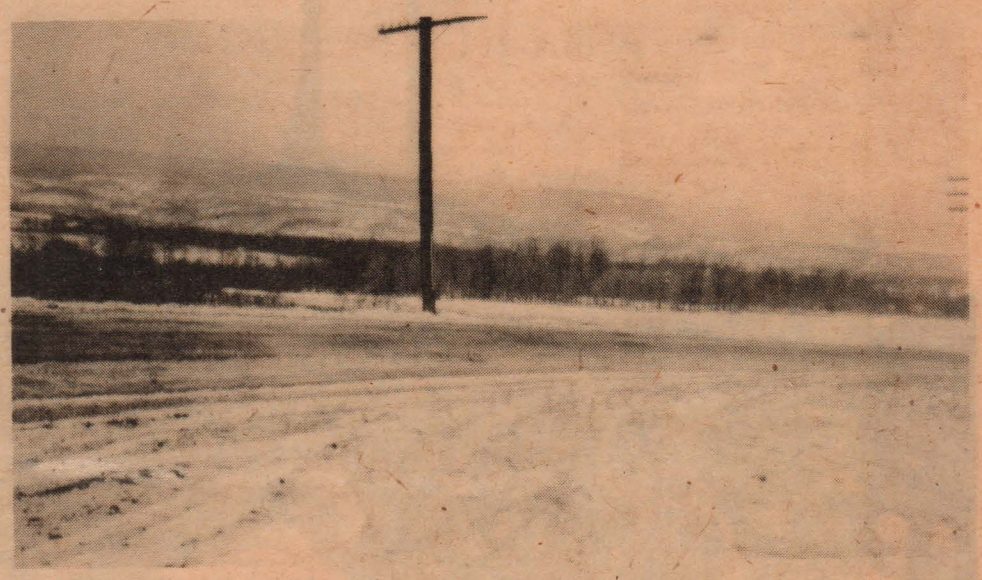
The old Bedford Pike

The rich land from which Richland Township derives its name is depicted in this pastoral scene preserved by a former government photographer, Clifford Chapman, who died recently. His widow, the former Dolores Weaver, resides in Silver Spring, Md. Only the few structures along the old Bedford Pike (Route 56) breaks up the beautiful farmscape which once dominated the East Hills before the advance of urban development. Mr. Chapman took this photo from high ground looking northeast from the former fire tower. Terlyn Drive, junctioning off Route 56 at the top of Scalp Hill, now leads to residential properties where Mr. Chapman stood. To the right, the route leads to Windber. The road heading toward the water towers seen at the top of the photo is now Theatre Drive. It provides access to Richland elementary, junior and senior high schools and the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown.



Belmont, in 1900

Eighty-three years have passed since this photo of the Wertz farm was taken in 1900 in the Belmont section of Richland Township. The landscape now is dotted with houses, many of which were constructed by the late Jacob Hoffman after he parceled off the ground into lots. The photographer was at the top of Belmont Street facing the eastern horizon. Denny Bixler Sr. of 62 Colgate Ave., a collector of old photographs, copied this photo from a glass plate and loaned it to the Richland Township sesquicentennial historical committee. As a further identifying point, the site of the present Belmont Homes would be to the rear of the photographer.



Before the Bel Air

This winter scene is how the landscape looked before it became the site of the Bel Air Shopping Plaza. In the foreground is the Windber Road or the Bedford Pike, now known as Scalp Avenue and Route 56. You are looking west toward the Laurel Mountain. The Conemaugh Gap at the right is barely discernable. The photo taken on the Lehman farm is the property of Muriel Hostetler of Indiana, widow of the late Cloyd Hostetler.

Scrapbook suggestion

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Elton Road's origin

The county commissioners on May 19, 1917, offered Richland Township $12,500 toward the building of a road from Geistown to the Adams Township line — providing the road was constructed of brick on a concrete base.

In June, the bids were opened and a brick road speeded 1921 traffic through the township.

Speed limits evolved, and Constable D. J. Baumgardner was paid $24 for $2 fines collected on the new Elton Road.

#21

Jacob Hoffman helped 'little people' in East Hills

By James W. Siehl

Sixteen years have passed since the death of Jacob Hoffman — politician, conservationist, humanitarian — but his memory still has a special place with countless "little people" who benefited from his self-help concept of home building.

A man who lived by the Golden Rule, he was responsible for hundreds of residents of Richland Township, Geistown Borough and Stonycreek Township to realize the American Dream — "own your own home."

Jake Hoffman began building houses back in about 1938, at a time when the area was bogged down by the great depression. Day-old bread was selling for two cents a loaf, to put the period in perspective.

Over the next 25 years, until about 1964, Mr. Hoffman built some 800 houses, and he did it with the expectation of making a minimum profit — about $500 to $1,000 on each property, according to his son-in-law, David Samuel of 625 Belmont St. Mr. Samuel is married to the former Mary Grace Hoffman, only child of the deceased builder.

"There was only one man like him," said Mrs. Samuel. "He did a lot of good in this world while he was here."

Supporting Mr. Hoffman's reputation for fairness, Mr. Samuel said, "I knew several people he felt had paid him too much, and he gave money back to them."

The start

Beginning with 120 acres of ground he owned in the Belmont section of Richland Township, Mr. Hoffman got into the building business by parceling off the land and selling the lots for $200 each as housing sites.

Initially, Mr. Hoffman, who resided at 121 Kring St., had operated a dairy farm at the location. He did his own milking. He also raised a lot of hogs.

His early background included a four-year term from 1926-30 as Cambria County controller. He unsuccessfully ran for a congressional seat.

But, his success as a builder stemmed from his ability to buy real estate at a reasonable cost, convert the land into lots and build houses for a reasonable price. He did not inherit any property.

"He depended upon mass production," said Mr. Samuel.

At his peak, Mr. Samuel said Mr. Hoffman had employed about 35 men who worked in four groups, each specializing in a specific phase of construction.

Murry Shaffer of 829 Leisure Ave. resides in one of Jake's typical Cape Cod, story-and-a-half houses. It has two bedrooms upstairs and one downstairs.

"We put a lot of extras in our house," said Mr. Shaffer, mentioning in particular an extra bath. It was constructed in 1952.

Jacob Hoffman

Mr. Shaffer recalled that he had his choice of a number of house plans. He said no specific downpayment had been required.

"He was very reasonable," Mr. Shaffer said. "After we had it built, we got together. He gave us a basic idea what it would cost. Of course, changes added to the cost."

Mr. Shaffer said his downpayment was less than $2,000 and that Mr. Hoffman had arranged the financing.

"Our mortgage was only $6,500."

Mr. Shaffer said he was able to keep the mortgage low by working off quite a bit of the cost. He said he did the outside painting and installed the septic tank, among other agreed tasks.

Mr. Samuel said that his late father-in-law had virtually no interest in building houses for people who had a sufficient downpayment that they did not need to do some of the work themselves.

"He would fall asleep talking to them," Mr. Samuel said, and he meant it literally.

"He didn't take advantage of anybody," Mr. Samuel continued. "He gave people a chance to work off anything they wanted to — bricking, rock lathe, septic tank, painting, varnishing, landscaping, sidewalks. . . anything they could do."

The Samuels have a loose-leaf notebook in which Mr. Hoffman had recorded estimated costs of building houses.

On the first page under the name of William Kenny, Mr. Hoffman had estimated the cost at $2,558.57. There was a note that Mr. Kenny "agrees to give $20 worth of work at 50 cents per hour and one week's work." There was no date. The biggest expenditure was $1,074.59 to the Johnstown Planing Mill for lumber.

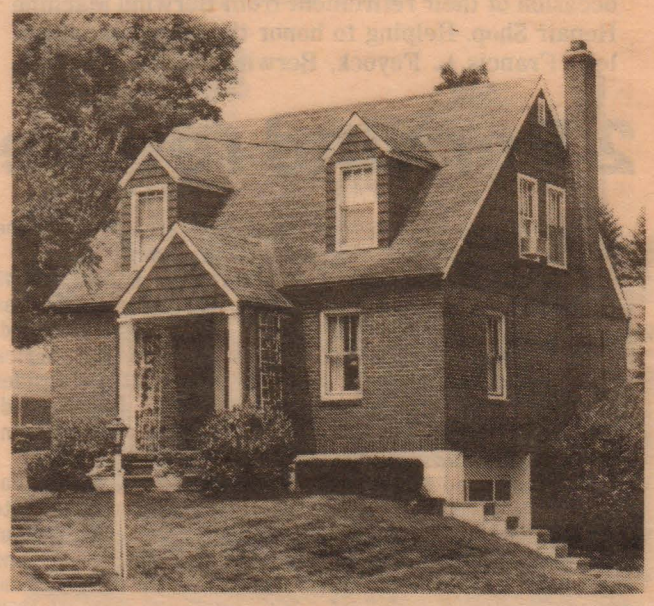
Visited India

In his later years, concerned about housing problems in backward countries, Mr. Hoffman made a number of trips to India where he advanced his self-help ideas.

Mr. Hoffman died in July 1967 at the age of 81. He left half of his estate to his widow, Carrie B., who resides at the Church of the Brethren Home, Scalp Level.

With the exception of about $8,000, the balance of the estate was left to the American Friends Service Commission and the Brethren Service Commission for the purpose of aiding and promoting in the development of a self-help housing program in the country of India.

"It is my purpose and design to help create a more friendly relationship between the United States of America and such countries by aiding poor and destitute people in those countries in their own efforts to provide better housing for themselves," his will reads. "It is my view that helping such people in self-aided housing programs will more likely win their support of our own American democratic way of life . . ."



Hoffman house

This Cape Cod style home of Galen Lehman, 716 Belmont St., is typical of the hundreds of homes constructed in the East Hills by the late builder Jacob Hoffman. Mr. Hoffman's self-help concept enabled many people to buy their own home who otherwise could not because they lacked a substantial down payment.

Noah Hoffman homestead

This photo was taken in 1900 of the Noah Hoffman homestead on what is now the Elton Road. Noah Hoffman was the father of Jacob Hoffman, the late building contractor and civic leader. The family on the porch includes (left to right) Cloyd Hoffman, Lizzie Hoffman, Cora Hoffman, Noah Hoffman, Jacob Hoffman, Myra Hoffman and friend (unidentified). Noah Hoffman died at the age of 89. After moving to Richland Township from Scalp Level, he served as school director, road supervisor, auditor, assessor and school teacher. Jacob Hoffman was a member of the Richland School Board at the time of his death. Jacob Hoffman was the first state forester hired in Pennsylvania. He also served as director of the national parks of the eastern United States and of the state parks of Pennsylvania.

Scrapbook suggestion

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A Hoffman estimate

Selected at random from a notebook of handwritten estimates for houses Jacob Hoffman contracted to build is a proposal for Russell Potter. The estimate came to $2,679.

It was itemized as follow:

Lumber, $1,000.
Plumbing and heating, $394.
Carpenter's work, $450.
Sanding, $20.
Hardware, $20.
Sheet metal, $30.
Paint, $50.
Water tax, $5.
Flue, $65.
Linoleum, $40.
Plaster, $200.
Electricity, $100.
Trimming (flashing), $30.
Tile, cement, sand, $100.
Wall, $175.

No date is listed. However, it is known that Mr. Hoffman used the book when he was beginning his 25-year-building career in the late 1930s.

Leafing through the pages, none of the estimates were more than $4,285. The majority were in the $2,500 to $3,700 range.

Erma (Hershberger) Shumaker of 2744 Bedford St. had to resort to a magnifying glass to identify some of the people in this old photo. It was taken in front of the first of three church buildings the congregation of Bethany United Methodist Church has occupied since its formal organization 80 years ago. Mrs. Shumaker's father, Samuel I. Hershberger, donated the property along Leventry Road for construction of the original wooden church. Subsequent brick structures were built at the location in 1927 and 1959. Flag holders are W. G. Hershberger (left) and Henry Guyer (right). The men in front of the doors (left to right) are Grant Custer, William Paul and Samuel I. Hershberger (donor of the land). Because of the difficulty separating the group into rows for identification purposes, others in the photo will not be listed in any order. Adults identified include Odie Shank, Bertha (Paul) Wolf, Esther Custer, Mrs. James Hershberger, Florence Wingard, James Hershberger, Edna (Berkey) Wissinger, Mrs. Mary Hershberger, Myrtle Malzi, Mrs. John Hershberger, Lillie (Parker) Horner, Hilda Kinsey, Mary Parker, Ethel Groover, Milton Groover, Mrs. James Groover, Stella Groover, Ida (Custer) Grant, Mrs. Moses Miller, Pansy Gaston, Mrs. John Blough, Sidney Layton and Mabel McKinney. Identifiable children are Ruth Hardy, Miriam Mickey, John Blough, Ida Hershberger, Stanford Hershberger and Harvey Berkey.

#22

Bethany church in Richland has pre-1900 origin

By James W. Siehl

Beginning as an Evangelical church, Bethany United Methodist Church at 112 Leventry Road has been involved in two mergers in its lengthy history as one of the oldest Protestant churches in East Hills.

Although the congregation was organized officially in 1903, when the name Bethany United Evangelical Church was chosen, its origin goes back before the turn of the century.

At that time, religious services were held in private homes and on camp meeting grounds on the Jacob Varner farm near Elton.

The pioneer congregation was part of what was known as the Cambria Circuit of the Pittsburgh Conference of the United Evangelical Church. The charge included Scalp Level, Salix and Mount Hope.

On July 23, 1899, the Bedford Street Beulah Evangelical Church initiated a movement to establish a Sunday School in Geistown. The organizing session was held at the old Hershberger Hall at Elton Road and Leventry Road. Twenty-four members and 42 visitors attended.

With the formal organization of the church in 1903, William Paul and W. G. Hershberger were named trustees. Samuel I. Hershberger donated a tract of land for the construction of a building, and ground-breaking took place in May of 1903.

First pastor

The sanctuary was completed that year, and the Rev. Milton E. Borger became the first pastor.

Twelve years later, under the guidance of the Rev. M. V. Kelly, a parsonage was built at a cost of $1,000. The next year, 1916, a stable for horses was erected.

By 1926, the congregation was in need of a new building. Plans were drawn by W. S. Powell, Johnstown architect, and bids were received May 20, 1927. The contract was awarded to the Elton Lumber and Supply Company.

The building committee included W. G. Hershberger, the Rev. W. W. Hall, John Miller Jr., Nathan Oldham, J. C. Helman, James C. Ayres, Irvin Paul, Bruce Leventry, Sherman Allison and Ralph Garman.

The cornerstone for the first brick structure was laid in 1927. The edifice was completed and dedicated in 1929 with Bishop M. T. Maize officiating. Rev. Hall was pastor. The new building cost about $20,000.

An important milestone in the church's progress toward self-dependency occurred during the pastorate of the Rev. P. L. Griffiths (1936-45) when the church requested to be taken from the "Mission" list of the conference and be designated a "Station."

The first of two mergers affecting the church took place in 1946 when the Evangelical Church and the Church of the United Brethren in Christ united. The new denomination became known as the Evangelical United Brethren Church.

On Jan 18, 1948, a note-burning service celebrated the final payment on the mortgage. Bishop John S. Stamm officiated. The Rev. Harry G. Paul was pastor.

In 1954, plans were approved for the construction of a new educational wing. In the next four years, the congregation raised $60,000 to pay for it. Ground was broken in May 1958, and the new addition was dedicated June 21, 1959, with the Rev. Dr. Clyde W. Dietrich, conference superintendent, in charge.

A new parsonage was dedicated in 1966. The parking lot was blacktopped and renovations made to the sanctuary two years later at a cost of $17,000.

The same year, 1968, the church became Bethany United Methodist Church with the merger of the Evangelical United Brethren Church and the Methodist Church.

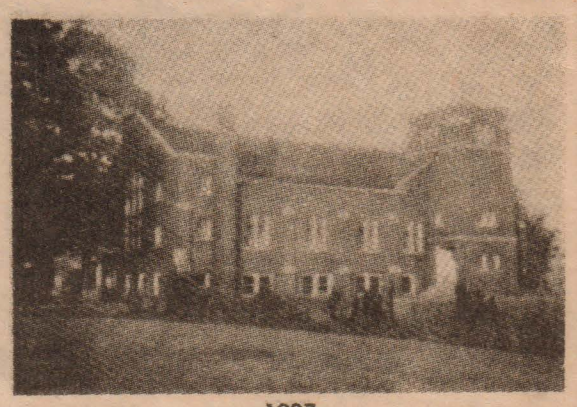
In 1975, the Rev. Gerald O. Bishop concluded 13 years of pastoral ministry at Bethany church. He was succeeded by the Rev. Jerry L. Gray.

Two significant ventures in the ministry to children took place in 1976 — "The Year of the Child." A nursery school was started with a class of 12 three-year-olds and a class of 12 four-year-olds. Marion Yoder was employed as teacher. In addition, the church initiated a Children's Fellowship for school grades 3, 4 and 5 with Sally Tennis and Jeff Mickle as leaders.

After a major storm

Continued on Page 9

1903



1927

1959

Scrapbook suggestion

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#23

Geistown is young, but its roots go far back

By James W. Siehl
and
Lois J. Siehl

Geistown Borough has the distinction of being Cambria County's youngest municipality. Although it was incorporated from a portion of Richland Township Jan. 13, 1930, its roots as a community go back to the year of this country's second war for independence.

In 1812, William and Rebecca (Hemphill) Slick sold their land in Johnstown and moved three miles to the southeast to a forested hilltop overlooking the Conemaugh Gap that until then had been inhabited only by Indians.

According to research by Bernice (Dravis) Tkacik, a descendant of Joseph Geis, founder of Geistown, there were about 250 Shawanees in the area. Earlier, Delawares, Asswikals and a few Mingoes also roamed the woodland.

Because the Slicks purchased their ground, they lived at peace with their red brethren. The large tract of land, which included a farm and a tannery, became known as Slicksville.

There is record of a Methodist church being founded in William Slick's home on Dec. 25, 1829. Mr. Slick took an interest in politics. An old-time Whig, he became a Republican upon the organization of the party in 1856. Later, he was a justice of the peace in Richland Township for 20 years.

In 1842, after the Slicks had divided their property into three parcels, Squire Horner bought one of them.

Squire Horner, in turn, sold a portion of the land — about 200 acres — to Joseph Geis. The purchase price was $950.

Joseph Geis (born in 1813) and his bride, the former Mary Anne (Imgrund) Fleckenstein had come to America in a sail boat on their honeymoon. They were both from Aufshoffenburg, Bavaria.

No wind

Because of the lack of wind, the trip across the Atlantic Ocean took 90 days. And, the young bride was seasick every minute of the trip, according to Mary Katherine (Dravis) Leffler, a sister of Mrs. Tkacik, granddaughters of Joseph Geis.

The newlyweds had been traveling west by way of the Portage Canal, which started in Philadelphia and went through Johnstown and Pittsburgh en route to Ohio. (Passage was $3.50 and food cost $1.50.) A stopover in Johnstown developed when one of the travelers became ill. Joseph and Mary Ann took that opportunity to go for a ride into the mountains, and became enamored with the beauty of the land.

Within 15 months, the couple were settled in a homestead and Mr. Geis went into the tavern business.

Joseph Geis' parents, Conrad and Ann Mary (Flasche) Geis, and two brothers, John and Conrad, also came here from Germany to live. John established furniture stores in Johnstown and brother Conrad settled in Indiana County.

After joining his son, Conrad Geis was struck by lightning. The experience left him deaf.

Joseph Geis and his father started a distillery, brewing rye and wheat whisky, at a site now occupied by the Busy Beaver Building Center.

The whisky had to be shipped to Pittsburgh via the Portage Canal to receive a state stamp. It was then brought back to the area and sold for 90 cents a gallon, according to Mrs. Tkacik's 1976 historical account on Geistown, "From Fruitful Farming to Suburb Charming."

The Joseph Geis homestead was erected on ground now occupied by Young American Furniture in the Geistown Clover Leaf and formerly the site of Von Lunen Restaurant.

Joseph Geis later enlarged his house and tavern business to accomodate travelers for food and overnight lodging.

The family called it the Half-Way Mountain House. Later, it was widely known as the Allegheny Mountain House, serving as the principal stop for those traveling by horse and carriage from Johnstown to Orris' Hotel and Tavern in Paint Creek. The journey took a full day.

According to Mrs. Leffler, a contaminated traveling family, stoppng overnight at the tavern, had been responsibile with infecting the entire Geis family with smallpox.

Joseph Geis' only son, Joseph, died with the dread disease. Another son was born and named Joseph, but he also died.

All told, there were nine children born to the union. Six daughters reached maturity and married. Joseph Geis always regretted that none of his three sons lived to preserve the name.

The daughters included:

Mary, wife of John Hirsch; Eva, wife of Frahk Limbacher; Catherine, wife of George Lulay; Clara, wife of Aloysius Hillenbrand; Helena, wife of Bernard Nees; and Rose, wife of Conrad Nees.

Joseph's daughters received their initial education at Blough School. They then were sent to St. Aloysius School in Loretto, which was under the supervision of the Sisters of Mercy.

As each daughter married, she was given a parcel of the original farm. However, two of the daughters, Mary Hirsch and Eva Limbacher, elected to leave the area.

These four daughters grouped around their father, Joseph Geis, founder of Geistown, made their homes in Geistown until their deaths. Left to right, they are Catherine Lulay, Rose Nees, Clare Hillenbrand and Helena Nees.

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After Conrad Geis died at age 83 in 1871, Joseph Geis divided his farm into a city plan, named it Geistown in honor of his father and offered lots for sale.

The little village grew to include three hotels (taverns), two blacksmith shops, several mercantile businesses, a carpenter shop, a lumber mill, a bowling alley (which was housed in Bernard Nees' tavern), a slaughterhouse, and an ice pond.

Joseph Geis also had a large barn, where he weighed wheat, oats and other grains for farmers in the area.

A tragedy in the family involved the death of Joseph Geis' brother, Conrad.

En route home from long service in the Civil War, he was killed when he stepped off a train in Mechanicsburg, Cumberland County.

Mrs. Leffler reported that Conrad's waiting wife, with a baby in her arms her husband never had seen, saw him ground to death under the train wheels.

After the Battle of Gettysburg, Union troops journeying home stopped at Geis' big spring across from the homestead.

"These soldiers of 1863, who were cold, hungry, wounded and weary, were too discouraged to continue homeward," according to Mrs. Tkacik. "They remained in Geistown until Abraham Lincoln, who was a friend of A. A. Baker of Ebensburg, came here to encourge them to continue their trek home."

As noted by Mrs. Tkacik, the Geistown area's particpation in the underground railroad predated Joseph Geis' time, but her grandfather perpetuated it.

During the days of slavery in the southern states, Johnstown was a recognized station along the route of blacks trying to escape from their masters to Canada.

The railroad, which was formed in the early 1800s, came through Bedford to Geistown and a stop at the William Slick farm.

After providing the escapees with shelter for a day, Mr. Slick conducted them to the farm of A. A. Baker near Ebensburg, who in turn guided them to the home of Dr. George Gamble in Cherry Tree.

#24

Some memories of Geis family and Geistown

Joseph Geis family, circa 1903

This photo of Joseph and Mary Ann Geis, settlers of Geistown, and their family was taken in about 1903 at the old homestead, now the location of Young American Furniture in the Geistown Cloverleaf. Joseph Geis and his bride and three brothers came here in 1839 from Auschaffensburg, Germany. Joseph developed a reputation as a hard-working farmer after purchasing about 200 acres of mostly cleared land from Squire Horner. Although he had three sons, they died as youngsters. The numerous descendants were the products of marriages involving his six daughters — Mary, wife of John Hirsch; Eva, wife of Frank Limbacher; Catherine, wife of George Lulay; Clara, wife of Aloysius Hillenbrand; Helen, wife of Bernard Nees; and Rose, wife of Conrad Nees. Mary Hirsch and her husband resided in Cambria City. Eva Limbacher and her husband settled in Pittsburgh. The other daughters were given parcels of the farm as they married and established their own homes. Mary Catherine (Dravis) Leffler of Menoher Heights, Johnstown R. D. 5, great-granddaughter of the founder of Geistown, was able to identify all but two men at the top of the photo. Mrs. Leffler had resided with her grandmother, Catherine (Geis) Lulay, for the last 15 years of her life. Mrs. Lulay was the last surviving member of the immediate Joseph Geis family. Mrs. Leffler's mother, Rosemary (Lulay) Dravis, died in 1971. The photo includes: First row: Hugo Martcie (became a priest and died recently), Otmar Grosch, Thomas Nees, Edward Mayer and Mercedes Mayer. Second row: Veronica Martcie (standing) with children Clarissa and Marie (foreground), Agnes Grosch (seated holding baby) and daughter Agnes Grosch, Rose Geis (seated holding baby William), Catherine (Geis) Lulay, Helen Nees; Joseph Geis (Geistown settler), Catherine Grosch, Lena Geis, Clara (Geis) Hillenbrand (in wicker chair), Katie Hillenbrand (standing behind chair), Anna Hillenbrand (with bow in hair), Regina Mayer (seated holding baby Gus) and Helen McKee (hand on hip). Third row: Fronie Nees, Maggie Nees, Gertrude Lulay, Louise Nees, Bertha Lulay, Rosemary Lulay, George Lulay, Conrad Nees, Bernard Nees, Catherine Donges, Josephine Nees, Anna Nees, Rose (Nees) Heinrich, Clara Hornick (holding baby Mary), Dorothy Nees and May Nees. Back row — Joseph Martcie, Jacob Grosch, John Nees, Lawrence Nees, next two unidentified, Calvin Donges, George Nees, Gus Hillenbrand, Frank Hillenbrand, Frank Hornick and Paul Hirsch.

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Texts

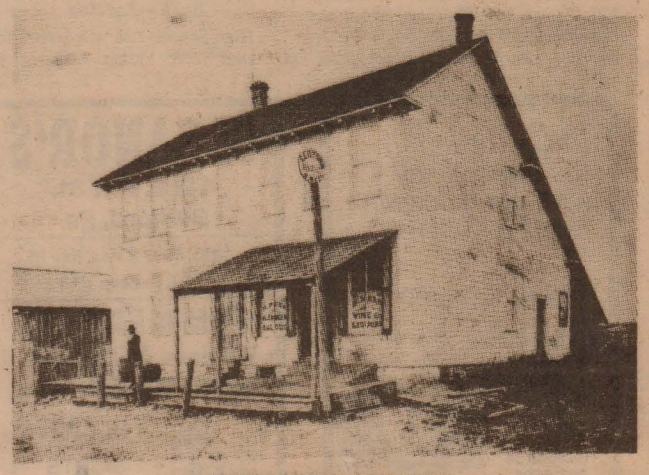
by

James W.

Siehl

Elton Road & Windber Road

Fifty-four years ago when the above photo was taken in 1929 this section of Geistown Borough still was a part of Richland Township. This is the junction of the Elton Road and old Route 56, then known as the Windber Road. Harry Grush had established his second store, moving a short distance from across Elton Road (now Bedford Street) from near Ketterer's Funeral Home and the former Geistown House, a property still standing. In the rear is the former Richland High School and Geistown Elementary School. Going back to the days of Joseph Geis, Geistown settler, a former blacksmith shop was situated at this spot. The accompanying photos portray the Geistown House in its early and remodeled stages. It was built by Bernard Nees, who married Lena Geis, one of the founder's six daughters. Bernard Nees went into the hotel business after a fire destroyed his hardware store.



GEISTOWN HOUSE

GEISTOWN HOUSE REMODELED

#25

At first, education came second in Richland

By James W. Siehl
and
Lois J. Siehl

Before the turn of the century, education took a backseat to the serious business of raising and harvesting crops in agriculturally minded Richland Township.

In 1879, the school term began in November and continued five months through March.

Setting out the crops in the spring and gathering the fruits of the farmers' hard labor in the fall claimed priority over school.

The very earliest of schooling available often was church-sponsored or organized through private subscription.

School attendance was not compulsory. As a result, the size of the class fluctuated with the press of household and farm duties.

Class roles indicate that the emphasis was on male education. Often the differential between the sexes was 3 to 1 in favor of the boys. Very few students past the age of 14 were enrolled.

The "Branches of Study," as the course of instruction was called 104 years ago, included the alphabet, spelling, reading, writing, mental arithmetic, written arithmetic, geography and grammar.

Primary goal

The primary goal at that time seemed aimed at giving the young people basic tools for living. Fundamental subjects such as reading and arithmetic were taken by an overwhelming majority of the students.

Handwriting, geography and grammar were advanced subjects. Unfortunately, many of the pupils had left the one-room class before those studies became available to them.

By 1888, the school year in the township had been expanded to six months — November through April — and then to seven months by 1902.

United States history showed up in the course of study in 1881. And, the records show that it was popular with the boys and girls. It might be surprising to learn that psychology was offered as early as 1885.

Vocal music was listed in the curriculum in 1888, but its availability seemed to depend entirely upon the interest of the teacher. In some schools, it was taught; in others, it was not.

Today's grading system did not apply in those days. According to the "Teacher's Monthly Report Book," issued by the state Department of Public Instruction in 1877, students were to be graded as follow:

Very good.
Good.
Middling good.
Poor.
Very poor.

Pride

There was a community pride in the early schools. This was evidenced by the numerous visits each month by interested adults as noted in records kept by the teachers who listed the names of "class visitors."

During the cold winter months when busy farm commitments became less demanding, it was not unusual for mothers, fathers, aunts, grandparents to stop by their neighborhood school.

There is suspicion that their purpose was not entirely of curiosity or observation. Since possibly their own education had suffered, it is suspected many of the adults looked upon those visits as a learning experience.

From novelty status, the early schools developed into motivators of community spirit and the hub of social contact.

The first Rachel Hill School

This photo of Rachel Hill School was taken in 1893. It was made available to the Richland Township Sesquicentennial Historical Committee by Blanche Wingard and Harry Lehman. Of wood construction, all of the earliest schools in the township followed this architectural style. Note the wind buffer on the north-west side of the porch. The first of three Richland public schools to bear the name Rachel Hill, it was situated along the Elton Road — between the Richland Mall and the Schoolhouse Road junction. Later, a second Rachel Hill School, this one of brick construction following the design of later years, was built directly across the road. It still stands, but has been converted into a residence. Preserving the historic name, one of two modern elementary buildings in the Richland public system has been named after Rachel Adams, a member of the first pioneer family to permanently settle in the township. Identifiable people in the photo include the teacher, Willis Wingard, in the center holding a book; Elias Wingard, George Wingard and Norman Weaver, second, third and seventh, respectively, left to right on the porch; and Tobias Wingard, next to Norman Weaver.

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A 1913 class

Students attending Rachel Hill School in 1913, when this inside photo was taken, were still going to the wooden building — the forerunner of three public schools in Richland Township by that name. The question on the blackboard, "What have you learned today?," would seem to have timeless relevance. At that period, Rachel Hill still was functioning in the one-room concept. William Wingard was the teacher. The following identification was provided by Bertha (Yoder) Patrick, owner of the picture: Front — Homer Wingard, Henry Wingard and Oscar Yoder. Center — Norman Yoder, Goldie Yoder, Sidney Yoder, Phanetta Marsh, Paul Fyock, Bertha Yoder and Fauston Baumgardner. Back — Howard Wingard, Cordella Marsh, Harvey Younker, Bertha Fyock, Lewis Wingard, Ruth Fyock, Mr. Wingard, the teacher; Dorsey Wingard and Mary Wingard. According to Mrs. Patrick, five members are living. They include sisters, Bertha and Goldie Yoder, and their brother, Sydney Yoder; Mary Wingard and Phanetta Marsh.

Church Grove schools existed for 160 years

#26

By James W. Siehl
and
Lois J. Siehl

One need not be a long-time resident of Richland Township to experience feelings of regret for a vacant plot of ground along Scalp Avenue where Church Grove schools had stood for 160 years.

The "Grove," adjacent to Weaver Mennonite Church and Richland Cemetery, was deeded as a school house lot in 1817 by James Sharkey.

The first Church Grove School was a log building. It was built by the oldest church in the township — the Weaver congregation — and was jointly used for worship and education before becoming a part of the public school system.

The poem, "School Days," published in a school souvenir booklet and distributed in 1914 by William Wingard, evokes some of these sentiments for times past and the now empty plot:

Twas autumn when our school resumed
And russet were the leaves.
The stately corn was tassel plumed
And ripened were the sheaves.
And quickened with vacations rest
Resolved our best to do.
We entered school with greater zest
Than hitherto we knew.
And glad we were our mates to meet
Our good old times review.
Our teacher's sunny smile to greet
And all our love renew.
Oh! Widely, too, we oped our eyes
To our next holiday,
When we should eat the pumpkin pies
Of glad Thanksgiving day.
And, too, we saw the lengthened ray
Of Bethlehem's bright star
That ushered in the Christmas day
Reflected from afar.
We have improved and felt the glow
Of progress truly made.
And feel indeed how much we owe
Our teachers' kindly aid.
So here's regards to each and all
Our sweet farewells till when
Our school bell rings its cheery call,
And brings us back again.

From a log-house heritage, Church Grove School went through two transformations before it and other elementary schools in the Richland School District were phased out with the construction of two modern elementary schools — University Park and Rachel Hill — in a complex that also includes junior high and senior high schools.

The log building was replaced by a one-room frame structure, which was opened in 1898 with Robert Luther as the first teacher. Its design was typical of other frame schools erected in the township during that period.

In 1914, the Church Grove frame building was replaced by the once familiar brick structure, which 60-odd years later was torn down after being gutted by a fire July 3, 1977. It was built by J. D. Strayer, with the final payment authorized April 2, 1920.

An item of interest gleaned from school board minutes of Sept. 5, 1914, directed that children from the Kring Street-Parker Road area be transported from Wertz Corner to Church Grove School during repairs to the Blough School. A. R. Parker was to be paid $2 a day to haul the children by horse and wagon the mile and a half distance.

It wasn't clear from the minutes whether Church Grove schools had been without the benefit of electricity until then, but on Nov. 23, 1931, the Richland School Board approved the installation of electrical lines to the building.

Noted in minutes for the same meeting date was permission to hire Dave Bheam at 90 cents an hour to build a cement-block septic tank on the property. "Local labor" was to be paid 35 cents an hour.

Ten years later, on April 21, 1941, the board approved the expansion of Church Grove School, then consisting of two rooms, to six rooms.

Continuing with a flavor for the period before and after the turn of the century, in 1880 the going salary for a teacher in the Richland School System was $25 a month.

Daniel Yoder was paid that amount.

Although records are incomplete, Mr. Yoder very likely was a very young man, possibly just out of Grade 9.

His qualifications might have included a few weeks of what was known as normal school for aspiring teachers.

The record shows he did attend county institute — a two-day obligation each term for all teachers.

Mr. Yoder kept class records in beautiful script handwriting.

According to instructions in his monthly report book, he was directed as follows:

"The marks and writing in this report book should be carefully made with ink, and not with pencil; and erasures or blots should not be permitted.

"It will be found safest and best in practice to keep the month's record on a sheet of paper ruled for the purpose. And at the end, when the average and percentage have been estimated and entered, to copy it into the book. This course is recommended.

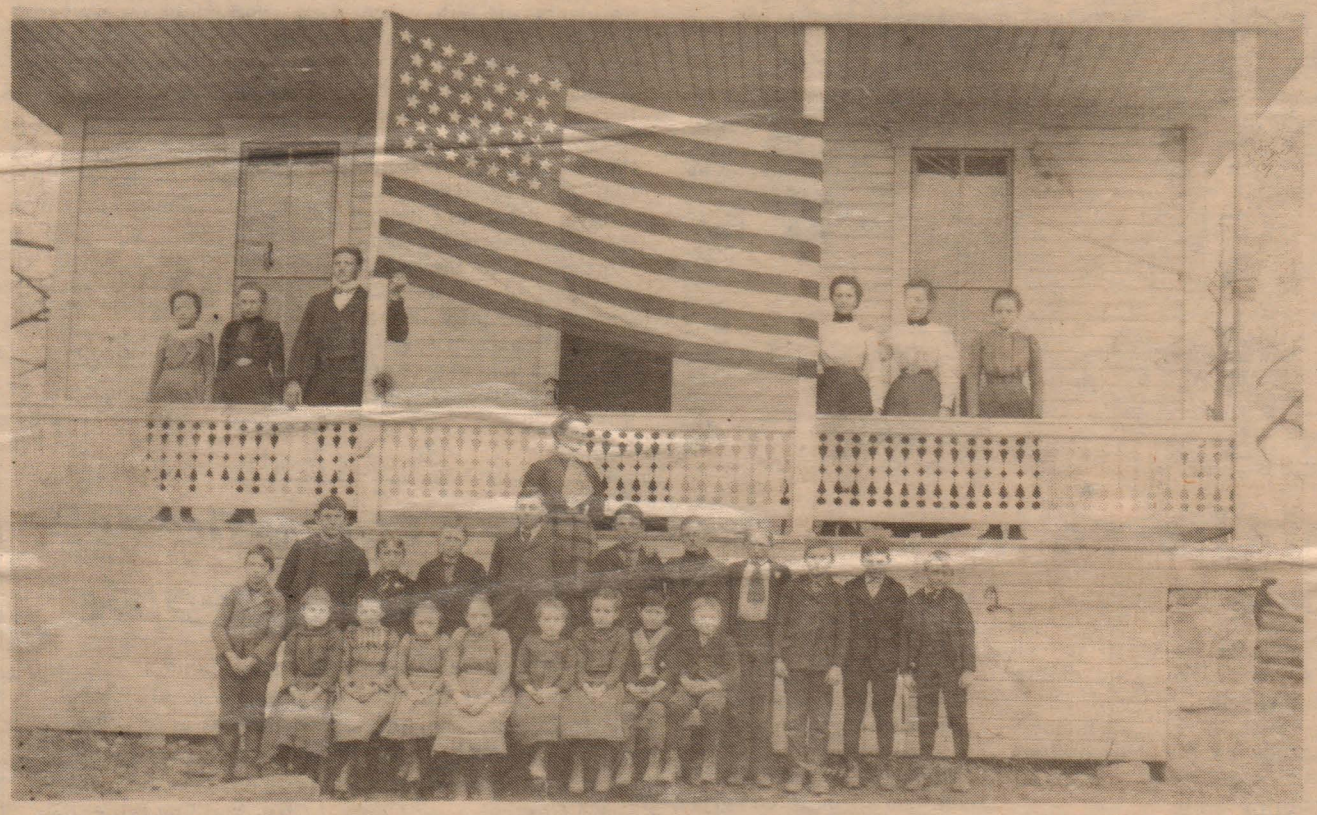
"A teacher's character is in no small degree indicated by the manner in which the monthly report is kept."

Two teachers — one to instruct the advanced students and the other to teach the primary pupils — were assigned to Church Grove School in some of the early years. Among them were:

Harry F. Werner and Francis Miller, 1915-16; L. C. Penrod and Amy Manges, 1916-17; D. G. Seese and Bertha Fyock, 1917-18; Ethel Kerr and William Wingard, 1918-19; and Alice Hershberger and Oscar Yoder, 1919-20.

Church Grove School in 1917

Church Grove was the pride of the Richland School System when this sparkling brick elementary school along the Windber Road first opened in 1914. Taken three years later, this photo includes school board members and other interested folks standing at the rear and in front of the two-room building. The teachers are D. G. Seese (left) and Bertha Fyock (right). From left to right in the front row are Verda Hostetler, Irene Frye, followed by two unidentified girls, Gladys Weaver, Cecelia Hostetler, Rhoda Hostetler, Edna Hostetler and another unidentified student. In the second row, Algie Wingard, fourth from left, Harold Luther (holding cat) and Galen Wingard, the last two boys at the end, are the only others identified. Also known to have been in the picture were Kenneth, Paul, Ralph, Maurice and Emerson Weaver, Martin Luther, Kenny Hostetler, Bill Luther, Lydia Luther and Paul and Howard Wingard. The handsome new structure replaced a wooden school house which was constructed shortly before the turn of the century. The photo is the property of Donald G. Baumgardner, 300 Kerr Drive.



Church Grove School in 1900

Church Grove School was a one-room frame building when this patriotic photo was taken in 1900, only two years after it had replaced a log school house. The photo was furnished by Ruth Dyer of 212 Luther Road. Her late father, Alonzo Baumgardner, and aunt, Carrie Baumgardner, are among the students who also included Arthur Hostetler, Calvin Orris, Albert Wineland, Maurice Lehman, Ira Ream, Hiram Fyock, Clyde Hostetler, Alonzo Foust, Bruce Luther, Carrie Ream, Rose Orris, Emma J. Hostetler, Clara Wineland, Lizzie Orris, Nora Weaver, Roy Ream, Verna Ream, Jacob Holsopple, Emma Hostetler and Amanda Eash. Mrs. Dyer's father is standing, the last boy on the right. Her aunt, who later married Maurice Lehman, is standing on the porch, the second girl from the left. Bessie Sherbine was the teacher.

Scrapbook suggestion

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#27

Harry A. Lehman recalls his Hoffman School days

By James W. Siehl

Harry A. Lehman of 223 Luray Ave., a spry gentleman who doesn't look his years, has some fond memories of his days attending the old one-room wood Hoffman School along Berwick Road in Richland Township.

One of nine children born to Isaac and Susannah (Custer) Lehman, Mr. Lehman was born in 1900. He lived about a quarter of a mile from the school in a farmhouse (still in use) along Route 160 between the Berwick Road junction and Windber.

Most of the time he walked to school, but often he could count on a ride from Samuel Hoffman, a farmer who would use a team of horses — sometimes hitched to a big bobsled — to drive his own children to school.

Mr. Lehman's entire formal education consisted of attending Grade 1 through Grade 5 at the Hoffman School.

"That was tops," said Mr. Lehman, referring to the fifth grade. "When you left there in the fifth, that was all. I was 16 years old then. I got a job with Berwind-White."

Mr. Lehman said he worked as electrician helper around the mines. He said a war was going on in 1916, and there was plenty of work.

Mr. Lehman remarked that a fifth-grade education at that time was equivalent to one gained in eight terms in later years.

He said the course of study consisted of the old basics — reading, writing and arithmetic.

"We did have physiology and mental arithmetic in the last year," he added.

Explaining the latter subject, he said:

"You went up front and you did the problem mentally instead of doing it on paper. You had to tell how it was done."

Spelling bees, conducted sporadically, were popular, Mr. Lehman said. "There were no prizes — just the honor of being at the head of the class."

Remembering the old school, Mr. Lehman said a large blackboard, starting about three feet from the floor, occupied the entire front of the room.

Heat source

A coal-fired, pot-bellied stove was in the center. He said it was up to the teacher to get to school early to get the place warm.

"On a real cold day, it took a lot of firing," he went on. "Those who were sitting close to the potbelly were burning up, and those on the outside were cold."

As for the average number of boys and girls attending, Mr. Lehman said, "I would say 20 was tops."

According to Mr. Lehman, school operated from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., with a lunch break.

He said everyone carried a snack, and since there were no paper bags, everyone had a lunch pail.

"We had a lot of fun. We played ball at recess. At noon time, we had an hour. We could roam the country there, we older ones, as long as we were back when the bell rang."

Of course, there was no indoor plumbing. A spring back in the woods was the source of drinking water. "Two-holer" outhouses — one for the boys and one for the girls — were ways of life in those days," Mr. Lehman recalled with a smile.

Never was there more than one teacher assigned to the school for the term, Mr. Lehman said.

Starting the day's instruction, Mr. Lehman said the teacher would call the first class up to a row of empty seats. In time, she would dismiss that class and call up another group until each grade received tutoring.

"The teacher would always see that you had enough to do," Mr. Lehman said, "and homework, too."

Asked if there were ever any serious discipline problems, Mr. Lehman laughed and replied:

"No. Do you know what a rattan was?"

Groping for the proper word to describe it, Mr. Lehman said:

"It was long and not too much thicker than a real thick pencil. She used it for a pointer and she always had it handy. And, that would sting if she hit you across the fingers."

According to Mr. Lehman, it was rare when it became necessary for a parent to be summoned for disciplinary reasons.

The threat of having to "stand in a corner in front of all the school" and occasional floggings were enough to keep the students in line, he said.

Another means of punishment for the young pupils was compelling them to dust the chalk from the blackboard erasers by slapping them together while their classmates were enjoying recess, Mr. Lehman said.

The octogenarian worked for the coal mining company until 1923 when he took a job for his remaining working life with Flood City Brass & Electric in Johnstown.

1911 Hoffman School students

These children were attending primer through the fifth grade at the old wood Hoffman School along Berwick Road in 1911. The school, which opened in 1892, was replaced by a brick structure in 1916. Verna Hershberger (tallest in the rear) was the teacher during the 1911 term. The group (left to right) includes: Front — Chalmer Hoffman, Maurice Hoffman, Nora Younker, Lucy Younker, Rose Muller, Chauncey Hoffman, Tony Lombardi, Bombay Lombardi, Hatty Lehman, Mary Vitko, Clarence Wissinger and Forest Wissinger. Back — Luther Hoffman, Charles Younker, Tracy Attelaney, Elsie Hoffman, Cora Younker, Miss Hershberger, Lawrence Younker, Mary Muller, Harry Lehman and Andrew Muller.

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April 1, 1834, is significant date

By James W. Siehl
and
Lois J. Siehl

One year after Richland Township came into existence as a municipality, the first substantial piece of legislation authorizing the common school system took place April 1, 1834, when the state appropriated $75,000 to help organize it.

Prior to that time, an education could be gained only by attending private schools, operated by the masters who taught them, or at church schools or from a tutor.

According to research by George Statler, who in 1933 published "An Historical Pagent — Somerset and Cambria Counties":

"The first school in Somerset County, of which Cambria was then a part, was opened by a Mr. Kennedy in 1776.

"The early school near Scalp Level was on the subscription plan, and stood on the Johnny Ripple place, now known as the Hiram Hostetler place, on the south side of the house and the east side of the highway.

"Jacob Holsopple was the first teacher. Frank Wissinger (who operated a livery stable in Scalp Level) taught there later.

"One night, the school burned down, and the term was finished in the attic of an old log house about a mile away on the Peter Hostetler place."

The location of this pioneer educational facility, which was the forerunner of three schools in that particular area of what is now Richland Township, was on a sloping hillside at the junction of old Route 56 and Berwick Road at the top of Scalp Hill.

Still in use is the remodeled farmhouse formerly occupied by the Hiram Hostetler family. It stands near where old Route 56 junctions with its modern counterpart.

The problems

Cruel winters on the Allegheny plateau, keeping the schools warm, lack of shoes, disease, farm and home demands, and stubborn Yankee indifference to the concept of taxes — all complicated efforts to organize the common schools as public schools then were called.

S.B. McCormick, in his county school report to the state in 1856, wrote:

"The Richland district is a new settlement, and tax sufficient to keep the schools open four months has never been laid. There are some public-spirited men on the board now who may confer as great a favor on Richland as Lycurgus did on Greece — that is, establish a new order of things.

"My sympathies are with Richland. At present valuation, it would require a great many mills on the dollar to raise a revenue that would keep the 10 schools (in the township) open each four months."

No records are available on the cost of operating the Richland schools in 1856. But in 1871, $1,158 in revenue was collected to cover total expenditures of $1,103. That year, the Richland school term also was four months.

The first of two Hoffman schools was built along Berwick Road near its junction with Route 160, which links Elton and Windber.

It was a one-room, wood structure, standing back in the woods some 50 to 60 feet from a brick building which replaced it, and has since been converted into an attractive residence.

The Hoffman wood school opened in July 1892 and closed with the opening of the brick schoolhouse in 1916. The new structure, built at a cost of $3,944 by H.H. Gardner, served the community until it was closed Aug. 27, 1935.

Among those who taught at the Hoffman schools, some starting in their teens, were:

William Wingard, Stella Penrod, Russell Berkey, Lewis Wingard, Ortha Weaver, Grant Weaver, Genevieve Feltbauer, Newton Yoder, Robert Ripple, Emma Wingard, Verna Hershberger, Newton Hostetler and Civilla Kring.

#28

Myers School forerunner of public education

By James W. Siehl
and
Lois J. Siehl

Public education in Richland Township traces its birth to a wooden school near the junction of what is now Solomon Run Road and Walters Avenue.

Known as the Myers School, the one-room structure was situated along the ramp leading to the Johnstown Expressway.

Until the state legislature in 1834 authorized $75,000 for the organization of a common school system, parents were dependent upon private and church-related facilities for the education of their children.

It is not clear when the Myers School opened. But, records are available of other Richland schools dating back to 1871, and the Myers School predated them.

Boon to settlers

Serving a more populous area of the township, with people in the City of Johnstown beginning to move in that direction, the Myers School also was a boon to settlers in the Geistown vicinity. Since there was no common school in Geistown, children of those folks went to either Myers School or to Blough School in the Belmont district.

At the completion of the 1914 term, a new brick school replaced the wooden building at the site. It was built at a cost of $2,757 by John Hartley.

A contest was held to rename the property. A. C. Green, a fruit farmer from the high ground on Fulmer Road (a route leading to Frankstown Road), was the winner. He suggested that the school be called Good Hope.

Mr. Green was the father of Bertha, Rosemary and Susan Green, students at Good Hope School. Later as adults, Bertha and Sue taught in the Richland School System.

Good Hope School opened in November of 1914. It continued to serve the community for nearly a quarter of a century until a decision was reached to close it in 1937. The old wood building was sold for $500 to trustees of Calvary Evangelical Church.

Among the former teachers at the old Myers School were R. Bruce Luther, Nora Rouser, Earl R. Mishler, W. H. Fyock and Verda Dyer.

Myers School's last class

This historic photo, with the old wood Myers School in the background, was provided by Wilma (Storck) Moschgat to the Richland Township Sesquicentennial Historical Committee. These young people comprised the last group to attend the former one-room school house at Solomon Run Road and Walters Avenue in 1913-14. It was replaced by a new brick building at the site in November 1914. The teacher is Norma Rouser. On the steps (left to right) are Cora Tomb, Rosemary Green, Grace Tomb, Katherine Hasse and Nellie Ripple. Others (left to right) are: First row — Henry Haas, Kenneth Miller, Agnes Storck, Alberta Miller, Bertha Haas, Bertha Green, Mary Hoffman, Rosie Miller, Sophie Heidingsfelder, Margaret Heidingsfelder, Wilma Storck, Elsie Heidingsfelder, Elda Miller, Alice Hoffman, Esther Erb, Pearl Hoffman, Phoebe Miller, Edna Erb and Ann Heidingsfelder. Second row — George Heidingsfelder, John Hofecker Bowden, Ralph Rose, Brian Tomb, Elsie Hoffman, Robert Haas, Victoria Lazeski, Lloyd Ripple, Jennie Ripple, Fred Haas, Mabel Speicher, George Haas, Merna Petrikin, Dibert Hoffman, Edna Rose and Walter Rose.

Listed among those who taught at Good Hope School were Howard E. Bloom, Grant E. Weaver, Bruce Luther, Evelyn Batey, Daniel Luther, Martha Bloom, Agnes Davis, Esther Hostetler, James Wertz and Stanford Hershberger.

1874 thoughts

In 1874, in making his eighth and final report before leaving his position, T. J. Chapman, superintendent of Cambria County Schools, noted that the signs of the times were promising for the public school system in the county.

He wrote:

"Our teachers are improving; our directors are taking more interest in the schools, and our people generally are waking up. This is indicated everywhere. Let the good work go on."

From 1868 through 1874, Mr. Chapman reported that the number of school districts in the county expanded to 37 from 29 and the number of schools to 196 from 175, with the average length of term increasing to 5.66 months from 4.20 months. The teachers' average monthly salary increased to $37.24 from $30.76.

Bibles and testaments were included among the regular textbooks in all of the Richland schools in 1875.

Interestingly, battle lines were being drawn nationally over the church-state issue in public education.

In 1876, J. P. Wickersham, then state superintendent of public instruction, in his annual report posed the question, "Is our common school system in danger?"

Mr. Wickersham referred to a speech by President Ulysses S. Grant given earlier that year at a reunion of the Army of Tennessee in which the president stated:

"In a republic like ours, where the citizen is the sovereign and the official the servant; where no power is exercised except by the will of the people, it is important that the sovereign, the people, should possess intelligence. The free school is the promoter of that intelligence which is to preserve us as a free nation...

"Let us all labor to add all needful guarantees for the security of free thought, free speech, a free press, pure morals, unfettered religious sentiments and of equal rights and privileges to all men, irrespective of nationality, color or religion.

"Encourage free schools, and resolve that not one dollar of money appropriated to their support shall be appropriated to the support of any sectarian school.

"Resolve that neither the state nor nation, nor both combined, shall support growing up in the land of opportunity of a good common school education, unmixed with sectarian, pagan, or atheistical dogmas.

"Leave the matter of religion to the family altar, the church, and the private school, supported entirely by private contributions. Keep the church and the state forever separate."

Comments added

In his comment, Mr. Wickersham noted:

"First, we mean in the administration of school affairs to treat all sects, and all parties of our citizens, with the strictest impartiality. The conscientious scruples of all must remain inviolate.

"No books must be used in our schools, and no exercises take place in them, to which any reasonable man can conscientiously object. Catholic and Protestant, Rationalist and Jew, all, must be treated exactly alike. The majority pinciple must be waived here, and the rights of the child of the most obscure and friendless citizen in the commonwealth must be respected . . .

"The Bible is a holy book. It is the chief cornerstone of our civilization. Its sacred pages are the source of our faith, and the guide of our lives. By it sanctity is given to the oaths of men when the truth and the fulfillment of important trusts are required of them; and the patriot, no less than the Christian, finds in it that inspiration which forms the basis of devotion.

"I would like to have a copy of the Bible upon the desk of every teacher in the sight of all the children in the land. If never opened, it would still be God's book, ever teaching its silent lessons and imposing something of self-reflection and reverence for sacred things upon the character of youth.

"If solemnly read by a loved teacher, its holy precepts would sink, like seeds into fallow ground, deep into little tender hearts, to ripen in after days in harvests of good works.

"But sooner than take from a single citizen his equal rights; sooner than trample upon the conscience of one honest man; sooner than violate the heaven-born principle of religious liberty, that ark of our covenant which our fathers bid us guard with our lives and fortunes, and transmit, unsullied by unholy hands, to the generations to come, I would, if necessary, discontinue the reading of the Bible in the public schools, and relegate all religious instruction to the home, the Sabbath school and the church, and limit the common school to the performnce of its intellectual and moral duties . . .

"Here we stand. Schools must be maintained, supported by all, free to all and fair to all. All sects and all parties must send their children to these schools, or with their own means supply others better suited to their wants and wishes.

"There shall be no division of the public school funds. No citizen shall be exempted from taxation for school purposes. No public school shall be in an offensive sense sectarian, and no sectarian school shall ever receive a dollar of the people's money raised for the support of the people's schools.

"The integrity of the school system must be preserved against all who shall dare to assail it."

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A Good Hope class

Good Hope School, successor to Myers School in Richland Township, was four years old when this photo, provided by Susan Green, was taken in 1918. Holding the flag are John Haas (left) and Walter Rose. Others (left to right) are: First row — Ralph Custer, Ralph Rose, Carl Kamler, Charles Follmar, Henry Haas, Leo Kamler, John Miller, George Heidingsfelder and John Hofecker Bowden. Second row — Beatrice Storck, Margaret Heidingfelter, Cora Heidingsfelder, Ida Storck, Melva Speicher, Verna Speicher, Ethel Hofecker, Margaret Rhoades, Mabel Heidingsfelder, Ann Heidingsfelder, Katie Haas and Susan Green. Third row — Grant Weaver, teacher; Rosemary Green, Katherine Hasse, Edna Rose, Wilma Storck, Ann Heidingsfelder, Elsie Heidingsfelder, Bertha Green, Bertha Haas, Agnes Storck and Sophie Heidingsfelder. (Listing of Ann Heidingsfelder in the second and third rows is correct. There were two in the school. And, they were cousins.)

#29

Frankstown Road was site of early school house

By James W. Siehl
and
Lois J. Siehl

An early Indian path cutting through the northern part of Richland Township in later years became known as Frankstown Road.

The old Indian trail winding east to the settlement of Frankstown in Blair County is now a connecting link to Route 22.

As early as 1834, a log school house was in use along the Frankstown path.

By 1867, the log school had been replaced by a one-room structure known as the Red School House. The building was abandoned in 1883 in favor of a new frame school built at the same location. It was named the Custer School. It served the vicinity until it was closed in 1908.

First teacher

Jacob Noon is listed as the first teacher at the Red School House in 1867. Some of the others who taught there included:

Nancy McKee, J. R. Miller, J. Anstead, J. H. Yoder, Maggie Gettys, H. R. Musser, Jacob Gillman, Alva Chapman, John Wertz, Amy Mangus and George Hershberger.

In 1879, Amy Mangus wrote in her teacher's log that only about half of the boys and girls had necessary books, and that the school board had only partly adopted a uniform series of textbooks.

She must have been a popular teacher. The year after she left, the student enrollment decreased by 33 percent.

Some of the teachers at the Custer School were:

Jacob Gillman, Kate Doran, M. M. Roudabush, Harry Bender, M. A. Noon, Susan Holsopple, J. F. Felix, Cornelius Hershberger.

Jennie Coleman, M. L. Miller, Alice Jones, E. L. Giffin, Florence Baker, J. C. Luther, John Keefer, S. B. Hoffman and W. R. Gahagen.

Twenty-two people were listed as visitors at the Custer School in March 1881, according to Jacob Gillman's records. Earlier in the term, H. Berg, county superintendent of schools, had made an official visit. Prof. S. W. Strayer, county superintent in 1883, visited the Custer School class of George M. Hershberger in March of that year.

It seemed to be a common practice for students to visit other schools in the district. "Visiting scholars" were listed numerous times in the teacher record book.

Some idea of the cost of education before the turn of the century is reflected in a notation in 1896 by M. M. Roudabush, then teaching at Custer School. He wrote that the cost per scholar for the month of November was $1.06.

Well represented

In 1899, two-thirds of the enrollment at the one-room Custer School consisted of children from three families. They included:

The Berkebiles — Dorsey, Clarence, Earl and Mallah Berkebile; the Blooms — John, Lewis, William, Frank, Albert and Edward Bloom; and the Stulls — Birdie, Myrtle, Ora, Pearle, William, F. H. and Ira Stull.

As if they didn't present enough identification problems, teacher M. L. Miller had Lillie and Annie Moyer and Merle and Etta Custer.

The class roll that year also included Anthony Haws, Lizzie Freeze, Ella Giffin, Ella Allen, Pearle Fyock, Annie Rively and Irene Follmer.

In 1914, a new brick property called the Meadowbrook School was constructed about a quarter of a mile from the site of its neighborhood predecessors — the Custer, Red and log schools.

Classes were held there until 1935. The next year, the building and lot were sold to Frank J. Engbert for $500.

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Who's the teacher here?

Back in the early years of public education, the teacher often was not much older than the students — as evidenced by this photo which was taken in 1925 in front of the handsome brick Meadowbrook School along Frankstown Road. Can you pick out the teacher? The class (left to right) includes: Front row — Roy Havener, Charles Kelley, Harold Shaffer and George Mellot. Second row — Annie Fedorka, Charles Young Locker, Verda Helman, Charles Mellot, Florence Harteis, Frank Harteis, Mary Fedorka, John Kyle, Ethel Shaffer, Ralph Havener, Helen Fedorka, Irvin Shearer and Mary Shearer. Third row — Robert Eppley, Forrest Allison, Ephraim Fyock, George Harteis, Esther Havener, Elva Young, Bertha Green (teacher), Alice Gillman, Anna Mellot, Lewis Shaffer, Clarence Havener and Charles Kyle.

#30

Govier, Highland among Richland's early schools

By James W. Siehl
and
Lois J. Siehl

Among the early schoolhouses in Richland Township were two one-room buildings known as Govier School and its successor, Highland School, near Coles Cross Roads on Johnstown R. D. 2.

The landmark intersection is at Mt. Airy and Oakridge drives.

The records aren't clear on when Govier School first was opened, but structurally it was in the mode of frame schools built before the turn of the century, complete with a distinctive porch. It was erected on what then was the Fye farm.

Closed in 1913

The Govier School was closed in 1913 and replaced the following year by a brick building, constructed a short distance away on land acquired from Harry Gillman and renamed the Highland School.

The wooden building remained in use for storage until pressed back into service as a classroom in 1919 after a population boom in the area.

The brick Highland School eventually was closed in 1937 and sold to Jacob Brubaker in 1938.

Now a residence

The property, as was the case of a number of former schoolhouses in the township, was partitioned and remodeled for use as a residence.

Currently it is occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Martin Brasted and their family. Mr. Brasted, who formerly attended a one-room school in New York State, is a member of the faculty at the Greater Johnstown Area Vocational-Technical School.

Major alterations feature a different roof style. The old porch has been torn off and replaced, and a one-car garage attached.

Teacher recalls days

A former teacher at Highland School, Erma (Hershberger) Shumaker, provides a glimpse into the township's pioneer period of public education.

Mrs. Shumaker, who resides in a house built by her contractor father, William G. Hershberger, at 2744 Bedford St., has been living in that house for the past 42 years.

After her marriage in the mid-1920s, she lived in the Windber area for 14 years before returning to the homestead.

It was from this house, Mrs. Shumaker recalled, she many times walked some three miles to her teaching job at the Highland School.

"When the school bus couldn't get through, I had to walk," Mrs. Shumaker said. "At that time, they didn't keep the roads open like they do now."

As she remembered it, the boys and girls had to live at least two miles from the school to be hauled.

Just 1 bus

Mrs. Shumaker said the school district operated only one bus. Driven by J. C. Helman, it went all over the township picking up students, according to the Richland native, who is a descendant of Samuel (S. I.) Hershberger and Isaac Hershberger, early farmers in the township. Isaac Hershberger also was a former Richland justice of the peace.

A Govier School class

In 1913, two years after these students were photographed in front of the one-room Govier School near Coles Cross Roads, the school was closed and replaced by a brick structure. Notice the hand-me-down suspenders, cotton dresses and high-button shoes. The teacher was Miss Emma Wingard (third row, second from right). The class includes (first row, left to right) Margaret Schade, Agnes Giffin, Elizabeth Schade, Lillian Fye, unidentified boy, Verna Wagner, Bernard Bloom, Harvey Bloom, William Myers, Clarence Varner and George Varner; (second row) Nettie Funk, Mary Jane Myers, Hazel Giffin, Ervin Bloom and Carl Bloom; and (third row, beginning on porch by Flag) Laura Lentz, Mary Funk, Hazel Horner, John Schade, Calvin Thatcher and Irene Myers.

When transportation bogged down or roads became impassible because of heavy snow drifts, Mrs. Shumaker said, farm horses often were hitched to wagons and sleighs to get the youngsters to school.

Mrs. Shumaker's background includes membership in the smallest class to be graduated from Richland High School. When she completed Grade 12 in 1923, her only other classmate was Rosemary Green (Bush).

Up until the 1919-20 term with the opening of the new high school building in Geistown, public education in Richland Township did not go beyond Grade 8.

Teaching job

Mrs. Shumaker recalled with a laugh that she thought she was going to get away with something when a teaching position opened up in the district at the Mine 37 School in the fall of 1923.

She did not meet the minimum age requirement, but all was going well until the county superintendent walked into her class.

"I taught the month of September, and then October. And, November I had to quit teaching because I wasn't 17 until the end of that month," she said.

Erma was 18 when she started teaching at the Highland School. Her qualifications included four college credits from an extension course taken in her senior year at high school, plus summer school.

"I didn't get any more credits," she said. "I just had to wait until I was older."

Looking back on her time at the Highland School, Mrs. Shumaker said it was a good experience.

"Some of the children in the seventh and eighth grades were big enough that they could have wiped the floor up with me," she laughed. "I wasn't very big to begin with. I only weighed 103 pounds and was just 4-foot, 11-inches tall."

Discipline, however, was never much of a problem.

"Even though I was young and small, those big farm boys still knew I was in charge," she said with another chuckle.

Mrs. Shumaker said there were either 45 or 48 students in Grades 1 through 8 when she taught at Highland.

Even with so many students in one room, she said she did not consider the atmosphere confusing.

"You only had time for 10 to 15 minutes for each class," she said. "They then would work at their school work while I taught the next class."

Visited other schools

Commenting on the practice of visitation, Mrs. Shumaker said classes and sometimes the entire school would visit other schools throughout the district, traveling in wagons and sleighs.

"Don't forget," she reminded, "everyone in this area was related. If you went over to visit your cousin in Krings, you would just stay over and go to school the next day at Blough School."

Erma's teaching career was a brief one. She taught the next two years at Geistown School and then had to give up her job when she married.

"I substituted, but married women couldn't teach," she said, "because there were too many students coming out of school who couldn't get jobs."

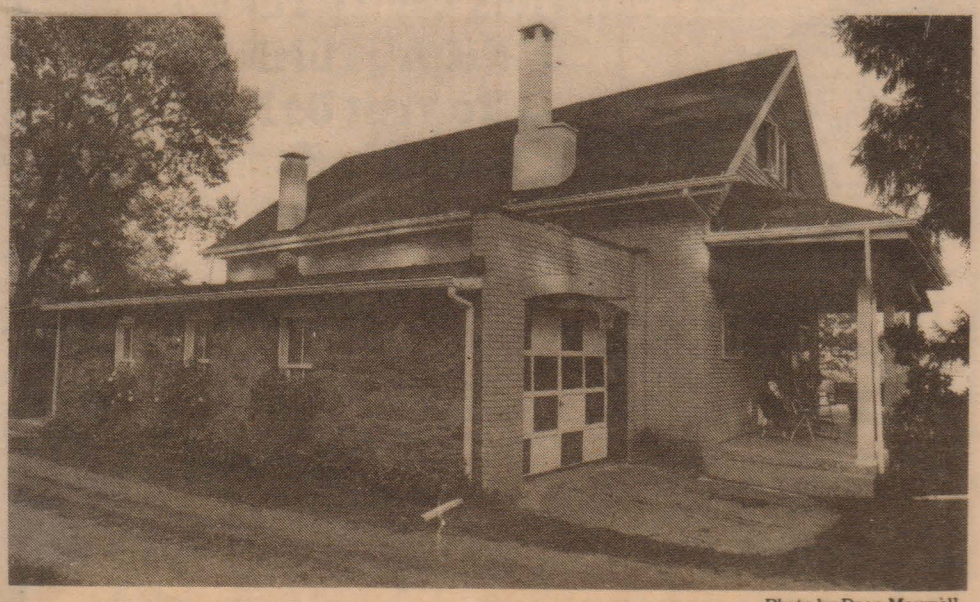

Photo by Dean Maxwell

Former Highland School is now a residence

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Have some news? Call these people

The Windber area news correspondent for The Era is Adina Horner. Her address is 607 23rd St., Windber, and her telephone number is 467-5216.

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People having news items for The Era should telephone or mail the items to these correspondents.

The Era's editorial and business offices may be reached by calling 535-6634.

#31

Early Ram cagers faced 'primitive' conditions

By James W. Siehl

Basketball in its infancy at Richland High School was played under what today must be considered as primitive conditions.

David W. Samuel of 625 Belmont St., a 1926 Richland graduate when the brick building in Geistown constituted the high school, brought back memories of those early days when he was a forward on the Ram cage team.

"We played under the auditorium!" underscored Mr. Samuel, noting that the small gymnasium in the new high school had not yet been equipped for basketball. Later, with its low ceiling, the Richland gym became an additional challenge for opponents because of the restricted shooting range.

According to Mr. Samuel, the ceiling on the basement court was even lower — no more than 12 feet high, except at one end immediately below the stage.

"It was a little higher," he said.

Remembering the low trajectory involved, Mr. Samuel said it was quite a trick to clear the ceiling and still have a chance at scoring a field goal.

"One year we won all of our home games," he went on. "Harry Grush (who operated a nearby grocery store) told us, ' If you win all your games at home this year, boys, I'll take you to Pittsburgh to see the Pirates play. ' So, we got to see the Pirates play. He had a car and took us."

Mr. Samuel conceded that being able to practice on the basement floor had given his team quite an advantage.

He said the Richland floor was inferior to any others he played on. An outdoor dance floor in Dunlo, which was boarded up and converted for basketball, wasn't far behind.

"We had a very good association," said Mr. Samuel, looking back on his fellowship with his team members. "We became really fine friends."

Team members

He mentioned the late Geistown businessman, Frank Asbridge; Kenneth Trent, Wilbur and Jim Wertz, Fred and Charles Caldwell and Alan Hostetler as former teammates.

Participation in athletics required more than the usual dedication in that era. There was no available transportation. As a result, the athletes often had to walk home from practices and games. Furthermore, sports took a back seat to home responsibilities. The boys were not excused from their farm obligations or other domestic chores.

A son of a Walsall coal miner, Mr. Samuel said there were times he walked from practice to his house three miles away, worked loading coal, walked back to school for a 7:30 or 8 p.m. game and then walked home again.

"We had a house coal mine. My father worked in the Lorain Steel Coal Mine and Ingleside Coal Mine. On the way home he would make a cut (in his own mine) and shoot it down. And, when he did that we had to load coal that he shot down and push it out for a fellow to come and get it the next day. I had my work cut out," said Mr. Samuel, and he meant it literally.

A lot of times, according to Mr. Samuel, after a game, rather than walk home, he would stay at the home of Wilbur Wertz (about a half mile from the school) or accompany the team's center, Kenny Trent, to his house at Coles Cross Roads.

"He (Trent) had a Ford Roadster, and I would stay with him."

Mr. Samuel said his team didn't practice that much, which left him time to work in a paper route in his busy schedule.

The 1928 Ram hoop squad

The Richland Township Sesquicentennial Historical Committee is indebted to Herman O. "Dutch" Weaver of 253 Luray Ave. for this photo of the 1928 Richland High School basketball team. Mr. Weaver, former farmer, township supervisor and road supervisor, was a freshman when this picture was taken. The brick high school at Geistown is in the background. Dutch is the young man with the ball. Flanking him are Frank Butler (left) and Alva Hostetler. The others (left to right) are Curtis Fleck, Marlin Wingard, Edward Allen, Oscar Yoder, teacher and coach; Foster Lehman, Albert Hostetler and Frederick Heidenfelter. Alva Hostetler is a county commissioner in Bedford County. Foster Lehman is retired and also residing in Bedford County, according to Mr. Weaver. Except for Edward Allen, who is residing in upper New York State, Mr. Weaver said he doesn't believe any of the others are living.

Early Ram gridders

Richland High School's gridiron heritage owes its start to the formation of a six-man football program in about 1938. It is believed these teammates are the first football players to represent Richland High School. The photo was provided by Edwin Warshel of 1408 Dwight Drive. Ed (No. 7) played center in a game which featured three offensive linemen and three backs. All the linemen were eligible to catch a forward pass. Ed is in the back row, third from the left. According to Mr. Warshel, the team played its home games on a field behind the high school in Geistown. He remembered playing twice at The Point Stadium, with one of the opponents South Fork. Wilmore, Beaverdale and Adams were other foes. Mr. Warshel was not able to identify everyone in the picture. The cheerleaders (left to right) around unidentified girl holding the football are Louise Mansfield, Wilma Schaller, Pearl Barkhimer and Lois Bash. Between Coach John Grebos (left) and Assistant Coach Marlin Wingard (right) (left to right) are Charles Russian, Charles Balogh, Ned Barker, Garretson, Webb, Kaiser, Martin and Seivers. In the back row (left to right) are Holt, Ned Hiner, Ed Warshel, next two unidentified, and John Ayres, now a local lawyer. Balogh went on to distinguish himself as an outstanding minor league professional baseball player. The two managers are not identified.

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#32

Richland's first high school came to life in 1917

By James W. Siehl
and
Lois J. Siehl

Until 1917, there was no high school education program in Richland Township.

Young people wishing to continue with their studies after the Grade 8 had the option of going to either Windber or Johnstown high schools.

According to Richland School Board minutes in 1914, the directors authorized that $94.50 in tuition payments be paid for that term to the Windber School District and that $54 in tuition fees be paid for three township students who attended Johnstown High School.

Those three students were identified as Regina Happ, Agnes Grosch and Margaret Mark.

On July 7, 1917, the board voted to establish a two-year high school course in temporary quarters at the Election House. Algie Baumgardner was elected principal and teacher at a salary of $100 a month.

The previous year, looking to erect a high school building, the Richland School Board began negotiations with A. D. Adams for the purchase "of a certain piece of ground located on the Geistown property of Reinold Flading and Jacob Grosch, consisting of two acres, more or less."

The transaction was consumated for $2,000.

Cash at premium

Cash money was at a premium in 1917 and inflation had to be a word virtually unknown, judging from the small amounts garnered in the sale of these items from the tract bought from Mr. Grosch and Mr. Flading:

One slaughterhouse, to J. C. Hellman, $29.

One bee house, to E. Heinrich, $5.75.

Pasture and fruit, to Bernard Nees, $11.

In 1918, a wooden three-room high school structure was opened on the property. It was built at a cost of $3,638. Joseph Kinzey was the contractor.

The high school was constructed along the old Bedford Toll Road on what is now Lamberd Avenue — about 50 yards to the right of the red brick former Geistown School as it stands today.

The high school program produced its first graduation class in 1920. It consisted of three members — Ira Hershberger, Kenneth Kline and Franklin Miller.

In 1921, the graduating class numbered five — Ruth Hardy, Stanford Hershberger, Bruce Leventry, Rhea Hershberger and Austin Hardy.

That same year, County Superintendent Bentz attended a meeting at Richland High School in which a discussion was held on the high school program being in jeopardy. Details were scant, but apparently the program was not meeting state standards.

The board appointed a committee, composed of Mr. Bentz, Abram Hostetler, Stephen Weaver, C. P. Trent and R. S. Mowery, to resolve the problem.

They were dispatched to Harrisburg to set forth their plea for the maintenance of the high school program.

In 1922, the school board purchased additional ground near the wooden school from the Nees estate and from Catherine Erchensch. Immediately, construction started on a new school. The next year, the handsome brick Geistown High School was opened.

With no longer any need for the wooden school building, it was sold in 1923 to William Sunshine for $620. Mr. Sunshine, in turn, sold the structure for the same price to the Grove Grange, with Ernest Giffin serving as its power of attorney.

Building moved

The building was moved across Lamberd Avenue to a site now utilized as a car wash operation. Then for many years, the former wooden school served as the Geistown Firehall.

During that early period, going on to high school was contingent upon passing the dreaded "high school examination."

In 1926, the Richland School Board authorized the operation of a summer school for the benefit of those students who failed the high school entrance test.

As early as 1882, Lewis Strayer, county superintendent of schools, wrote in his report to the Pennsylvania Department of Public Instruction of the need for higher education in Cambria County:

"Our people generally cheerfully support the common schools, and yet we cannot claim for the schools of Cambria County that degree of efficiency which is so much to be desired.

"I do not know that any child that attends our public schools is likely to reach manhood or womanhood without at least the elements of a common school education, but it is a fact that cannot be denied that too many of our pupils receive no instruction or training for the responsible duties of active life and good citizenship."

Although the seeds of higher education may have been planted in 1882 by a concerned Lewis Strayer, educational progress in Richland Township was an uphill fight.

The daily routine was hard. Farm days were long. Travel was a hardship. It was a time when anyone who attended church and wasn't a burden to his neighbor was considered a good citizen. Small wonder that it took 35 years for Mr. Strayer's seeds to flower into a high school program.

Richland's first high school students

This historic photo represents the first group of students to attend a high school education program in Richland Township. Up until the 1917-18 term, when the school district set up a two-year high school course in temporary facilities, township students if they wished an education beyond the eighth grade had to go to another school district. After the 1917-18 term, a wooden high school building became available in Geistown. Left to right, the young people are: Front — Bruce Leventry, Stanford Hershberger, Charles Nightengale, Abraham Hostetler, Walter Berkebile and Joseph Keifer. Center — Ira Hershberger, Helen Grosch, Franklin Miller, Loyola Horne and Nightengale (first name not known). Back — Algie Baumgardner, teacher; Marie Raab, Kenneth Kline, Rhea Hershberger, Alfred Hershberger, Gladys Kelly, Elda Berkebile and Ruth Custer.

1920-21 student body

These classmates formed the student body attending a no longer existing wooden Geistown High School in 1920-21. The frame building, constructed in 1918 along Lamberd Avenue, had a short existence. It was replaced in 1923 by a modern red brick building, which served as the high school in Richland Township until a new high school was built along Scalp Avenue (now the vacant East Hills School). Left to right are: Front — George Wertz (student standing), Ralph Weaver, Isbella Dover, Celia Hostetler, Pauline Helman, Elizabeth Luther, Rhoda Hostetler, Florence Allense, Martha Oldham, Rhea Shaffer, Hasle Duryea and William Luther. Back — Mr. Patterson, teacher; Professor Froust Hoover, Bessie Mowry, Maureen Hostetler, Stanford Hershberger, Rhea Hershberger, Austin Hardy, Ruth Custer, Bruce Leventry, Rosemary Green, Julia Hoffman, Alvin Weaver, Henry Hostetler, Erma Hershberger and Forrest Hostetler. The building in the background was later moved across the road and used as a firehall by the Geistown Volunteer Fire Company.

#33

Memories of 3 East Hills schools rekindled

By James W. Siehl
and
Lois J. Siehl

Continuing with a historical look into the roots of Richland Township's educational system, this week's Sesquicentennial Scrapbook chapter brings back memories of the brick Blough School; its wooden predecessor, known as the John Blough School; and the first Geistown Elementary School.

The old one-room John Blough School was situated in the vicinity of the Arbutus Camp Grounds on what was then the Wertz farm on the south side of Luray Avenue. District Justice Max Pavlovich now resides on the property.

The precise date when the school was opened is not known. However, records show that the school was functioning in 1878.

Six Blough children were listed among the 14 students that term. The enrollment included:

John Freidhoff, Louise Himes, Lucinda Blough, Mary Friedhoff, Irvin Blough, John Blough, Anna Speicher, Jamie Blough, Maggie Miller, Adaline Blough, William Blough, Flora Speicher, Kate Blum and William Howe.

Izia Miller was the teacher.

Closed in 1914

The frame building was closed in 1914. The next year, the boys and girls were transported by horse and wagon to Church Grove School while a new Blough School was constructed at the intersection of Krings Street and Parker Road in what is now the Belmont section of the township.

The two-room brick school was built on land purchased at a cost of $305 from W. D. Hemmingkamp. The ground had been part of the original John Blough landpackage, an extensive tract.

According to school board minutes, H. H. Gardner was paid $4,129 to erect the building. It was opened in 1916, but less than a year later it had to be temporarily closed because of extensive damage caused by land subsidence from prior mining operations. Half of the structure dropped about a foot.

After repairs, the Blough School was reopened and served the district until 1935 when it was vacated and sold to F. A. Slagle and H. W. Berkey. The purchase price was $495.

The old brick school was converted into a residence and still is in use. The current owners are Timothy and Carol (Blough) Brush.

Compared with other pioneer rural schools in the township, the old wooden Geistown School was a late addition to the Richland school system.

It opened just before the turn of the century in 1899 with R. M. Luther as the first teacher.

Some of the first students were:

Freda Engle, Bertha Lulay, Pauline Smith, Mablon Wingard, Suie Wingard, Tom Nees, Lizzie Wingard, Lena Engle.

Mamie Orris, Bessie Orris, Keturali Baumgardner, Edna McVicker, Edith Wingard, Rosemary Lulay, Rose Nees.

Elsie Wingard, Sam Zimmerman, Ralph Wingard, Lee Wingard, Joe Nees, Ann Jacoby, Veronica Nees, Mae Nees, George Nees, Lawrence Nees, Bernard Malzi and Joe Smith.

The two-room building was situated along the old Bedford Toll Road on the upper edge of a plot of ground now used for Geistown Little League baseball games. The area is behind the former Geistown red brick school, which recently was sold.

Wood was burned to heat the frame building. In 1919, A. E. Baumgardner contracted to supply fuel for the term. The agreed price was $20.

After the modern red brick Geistown High School became available in 1923, the old frame school was sold for $425 to William Gindlesperger. It no longer is standing.

1911-1912 students

This photo, provided by Erma Shumaker of 2744 Bedford St., was taken in the 1911-1912 school term with the old frame Geistown School in the background. The group includes several adult guests. Mrs. Shumaker was able to identify all but four in the picture. Left to right, they are: Front — Cloyd Shaffer, Garnet Knipple, Algie Wingard, Mary Milller, Ira Hershberger, Filgonia Schreyer, unidentified boy, Bertha Paul Wolf, unidentified boy, Helen Christ, Carl Kiefer and Freda Miller. Harry Hershberger is standing in the center behind Bertha Paul. Middle — Harvey Wingard, Albert Brandle, Victor Raab, Catherine Grosch, visitor; Russell Berkey, visitor; unidentified boy; Ollie Paul Hershberger, Elva McGrew Weaver, Suie Wingard, and Mabel Mckinney Deater. Back — Agnes Grosch, unidentified visitor and William Wingard, teacher.

1909 Blough class

This group of students made up the 1909 class at the old frame John Blough School, which had been built near the Arbutus Camp Grounds some 25 years before the turn of the century. Posing with their teacher (left to right) are: Fourth row — Melvin Blough, John Crist, Florence Groover, teacher; Blair Blough and Mary Parker. Third row — Bessie Hayes, Daryl Hayes, Rose Parker, Charles Parker, Mabel Weaver and Warren Weaver. Second row — John Parker, Edith Hayes, Clarence Morgart and Neva Harrison. First row — Ortha Weaver and Foster Hayes.

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#34

One-room schools came to end in 1920s

By James W. Siehl
and
Lois J. Siehl

A movement in the early 1920s to consolidate children in neighboring communities into one larger school building eventually brought about the end of one-room school houses in Richland Township.

The Walsall School and an elementary school in Mine 37, both serving growing coal-mining villages, were among the earliest in the consolidation concept.

Approval of a site for the construction of a consolidated school in Walsall was received from Lee L. Driver, director of the Bureau of Rural Education of the state Department of Public Instruction.

Dated May 2, 1921, the correspondence was addressed to D. S. Yoder, secretary of the Richland Township School Board. It read:

"Mr. Dallas W. Armstrong, assistant director, Rural Education, has made a survey of Richland Township in reference to the location of your consolidated school house. After having gone over the whole situation very thoroughly, he recommends that the site known as the 'Kunkle Property' be the one upon which the selection should be made. You can obtain as much ground there as needed. The property is well drained and conditions seem to be very good, indeed. With that in mind, we are sending you a formal approval of this site for a consolidated school."

The approved location was on land originally developed by Conrad Kunkle, one of the early settlers of the township.

Erected in 1922

A new brick school subsequently was erected on the property in 1922 at a cost of $12,375. It was vacated and abandoned in 1937 and sold to Joseph Lambert for $1,250. Converted into a residence, it is a well-known landmark on the Stony Creek River side of Eisenhower Boulevard.

The consolidated school replaced an old wooden school in Walsall, which in 1892 had been built on ground deeded to the Richland School District for the token fee of $1 by Arthur J. Moxham.

That school was situated along the old Walsall Road at the same site as the current Voice of Calvary Church. The wood school was sold for $425 in 1922 to the Christian Church.

A 1900 photo of the old one-room Walsall School and its student body was featured in the July 5 Sesquicentennial Scrapbook edition and the 18th edition the next week.

According to the 1890 Cambria County Atlas, a school — known as the Dominion School — existed in Mine 37. However, the historical committee has been unable to obtain any information as to its type of structure or when it was established.

The first brick schoolhouse in Mine 37, consisting of four small rooms, was built in 1913 on land acquired from the Wilmore Coal Co.

With the demand for coal increasing, additional company-owned houses were constructed, resulting in the hiring of more miners and bringing additional families to the coal town.

The increased population taxed the school facilities, leading to the erection of a much bigger brick building in 1936, costing $22,350.

The interior

There were four large rooms on the main floor. The basement area was open and had a high ceiling. It was divided into an auditorium and gymnasium.

The Mine 37 school was closed after the 1954-55 school year.

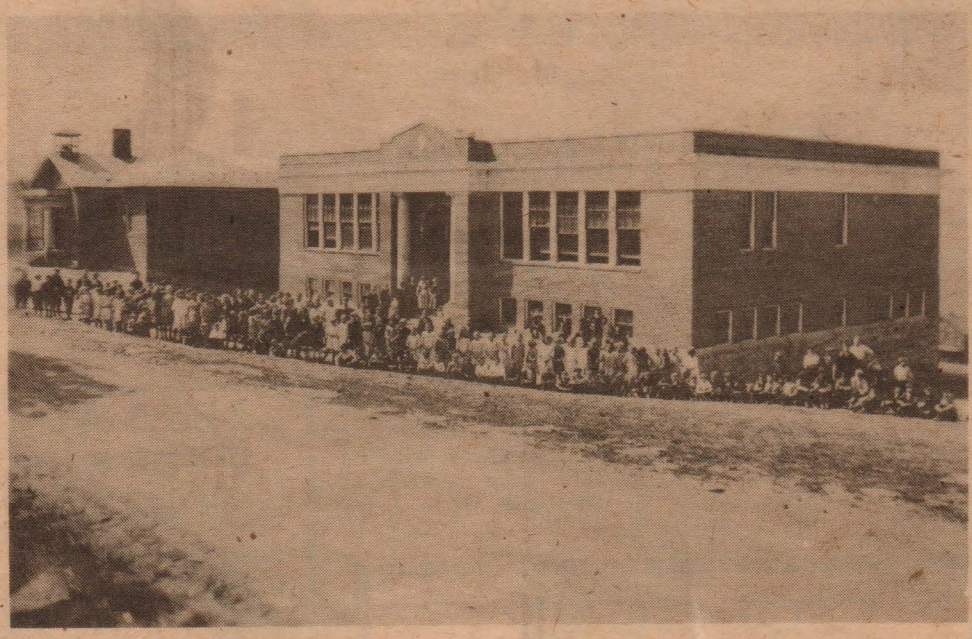
The school accommodated Grades 1 - 6. Classes had to be combined — first and second grades in one room, third and fourth in another, etc.

As a consolidated school, boys and girls at one time were transported from the Walsall, Ingleside and Riverside areas.

The smaller brick school was used for storage for a time before being torn down. Its successor no longer is part of the Richland School District. Now owned by United Metal Fabricators, Inc., Eisenhower Boulevard, the building is being utilized for storage purposes.

Students at Walsall school

Built in 1922, the Walsall brick school house in the background was a forerunner in a movement away from the one-room, neighborhood-school educational approach in Richland Township to consolidating boys and girls from nearby areas into a bigger school house. The property, now in use as a residence, may be seen by motorists traveling Eisenhower Boulevard. It is believed these students represented the 1927-28 class. Glendon Helman was the teacher. Others (left to right) include: Front — Liddy Fertick, Harriet Nowell, Dora Fertick, Carrie Moore, Marjorie Dutton, Helen Burbulla, Marie Noon, Florence Guyer, Eleanor Webb, Agnes Samuel and Thelma Fertick. Back — Minnie Deitke, Howard Dutton, Anna Jeshonek, George Lantz, Theresa Haughton and Edward Fleegle.



Mine 37 schools

No date is available when this photo of two brick school buildings in Mine 37 was taken. The older schoolhouse on the left was built in 1913 and abandoned when the much larger structure on the right became available in 1936. Notice the large number of students — quite a change from the 30 or less pupils standing in front of one-room Richland Township schoolhouses featured in this series.

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#35

An overview of early education in Richland

By James W. Siehl
and
Lois J. Siehl

Taking a peak at the old Weaver School — one of the very earliest in the community — along with backward glances at some of the people who molded public education before the turn of the century, the focus on Richland Township's educational grassroots winds to a close.

In past weeks, the spotlight has been on the early neighborhood schools. The Sesquicentennial Scrapbook series covered their development from one-room frame structures to larger brick buildings during a period when the educational process went no further than the sixth or eighth grade.

In its infancy, book-learning in the township took a back seat to everyday survival. The young people were needed on the farm. Consequently, schools operated just three and four months of the year — mostly during the cold-weather months when there were less chores to perform.

Past accounts featured the old log school along the Frankstown Road and its successor, the Red School House; the Myers School, Solomon Run Road; the Govier and Highland schools, both at Coles Cross Roads; Church Grove, Scalp Avenue; Rachel Hill, Elton Road; Hoffman School, now a handsome residence along Berwick Road; the Blough School, also a converted dwelling on Kring Street, and its wooden predecessor, the John Blough School, Luray Avenue; as well as schools in Walsall and Mine 37; the first Geistown Elementary School, Lamberd Avenue; and the first high school program, which was started in 1917 and led to the construction of Geistown High School.

The series also dealt with private education. Before the establishment of public tax-supported common schools, some parents paid subscription fees to have their sons and daughters tutored.

Attention also was drawn to the sacrifice and emphasis placed by families on education when St. Benedict's Catholic Church in Geistown was a Mission of St. Joseph's church, Johnstown.

Weaver School

As for the Weaver School, it was situated along the Mine 37 Road near its junction with what is now Eisenhower Boulevard.

Richland School District records note that in 1896 a land grant for the school property was secured from Alexander Weaver for the bargain price of $45. However, it is known that the school was in operation 46 years earlier in 1850.

Weaver School was closed in 1914, and the property sold to the Wilmore Coal Company the next year for $200.

Daniel Yoder, in his teacher's record book at the Weaver School in 1880, listed visits by school board members every month. On that basis, it seems safe to assume that public education in its early stages being a novelty — perhaps even a grand experiment — was something to watch. Closely!

The first substantial legislative act authorizing the common school system was that of April 1, 1834, when the state appropriated $75,000 to assist the municipalities.

Representatives of each school district in Cambria County were invited to meet with the county commissioners Nov. 4, 1834, to decide whether a school tax should be levied. The group approved a six-mill property tax to be collected by the county for school purposes. The Richland district was not represented at that session.

However, on May 4 of the next year, director Philip Heading represented Richland at a similar meeting with the commissioners to determine public assistance for the county schools.

In May of 1836, at another conference with the county commissioners, the concept for the common school system was successfully launched with a a unanimous vote for levying a school tax. William Slick represented the Richland School Board at the meeting.

In 1850, schools in Richland Township were open for only two months. All of the teachers in the system's nine buildings were men. They were paid a salary of $15 a month.

Enrollment at those nine schools totaled 352 boys and girls, and it cost 62 cents, a pupil, a month to educate them. The district collected $360.09 in taxes that year and received a state appropriation of $101.27.

12 schools

A state publication in 1856 reports 12 schools in Richland Township. The term that year was expanded to three months.

Managers of the school district's finances in those pioneering years must have been super budget shavers. In the six years from 1850 to 1856, the record shows that education's cost-per-month, per-student, dipped to 49 cents from 62 cents in 1856.

James Swank, county superintendent of schools, in a report to the state in 1861, wrote:

"Richland and Blacklick taught but three months during the past year. The directors of Richland, governed by precedent, did not think it necessary to require a longer term to be taught, in order to secure to the district its share of the state appropriation. They were undeceived at too late a day to prevent a painful disappointment. Blacklick was too poor to keep her schools open four months and also pay several hundred dollars of building debt. She hath done what she could."

Schools in those early years were directly affected by the financial condition of the immediate community. If crops failed, schools might not open the next term. In checking minutes of school board meetings, it becomes obvious that issues were handled simply and expediently. Family-centered problems, stemming from harsh conditions imposed on the Allegheny Mountain plateau, overshadowed the business of directing schools.

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Mary Weaver- 1st girl in row 1
Louella Weaver- 3rd girl in row 1
Calvin Weaver - Killed in W.W. 1

They attended Weaver School

It would be misleading to conclude just from their expressions that these youngsters, all dressed up to have their picture taken, are not very happy. This class was attending the old Weaver School, situated along the Mine 37 Road, when the photo was taken in about 1910. Most likely the reason that everyone seems so somber is a technical one. Pictures of people from that early era of photography typically were unsmiling because of the process involved. Subjects had to remain frozen a number of seconds during which time their image was exposed on a wet glass plate. The time period made it difficult to maintain a fixed smile. The teacher is Mary Miller (Baumgardner). The pupils (not listed in any particular order) include Calvin Weaver, Lily Gable (Miller), Louella Weaver (Baumgardner), Mary Weaver, Fannie Blough, Orin Gable, Merrill Gable and Gladys Gable. The photo was loaned to the Richland Sesquicentennial Historical Committee by Ruth Dyer of 212 Luther Road.

School director results from 100 years ago

One hundered years ago, in the race for school director in Richland Township, Henry Custer and Hiram Lehman each were elected to three-year terms.

Samuel I. Harshberger, board president, was re-elected to a two-year term.

The first Richland School Board members, elected in 1834, were Jacob Griffin and Philip Heading.

Other Richland school directors elected prior to 1900 included:

William Slick, Henry Custer, D. D. Stull, Jacob Miller, Harry Custer, Hiram Lehman, Jeremiah Walters, Jacob Holsopplel.

David Stufft, Abraham Weaver, D. H. Yoder, A. R. Miller, Levi Weaver, J. B. Lehman, Harry Gillman, John Veil, H. G. Varner.

George Orris, Jacob Gramling, Samuel Blough, Samuel Hoffman, Christian Miller, Moses Miller, Tobias Blough.

William Trent, Jacob Foust, Harry Walters, Abraham Hostetler, Isaac Hershberger, Noah Hoffman, J. D. Hershberger.

W. J. McCoy, P. J. Lehman, John Statler, Henry Parker, Nathan Hoffman, Austin Holsopple, Aaron Custer, Stephen Hostetler, Levi Wingard and R. M. Luther.

#36

He remembers his early years in Mine 37

By James W. Siehl

Growing up in a coal town was a learning experience as well as fun, according to Richard J. Sholtis of 1420 Dwight Drive, Richland Township.

"It taught me a lot," said the project manager and vice president of the Wilson Construction Co. His boyhood and young adult years were spent in Mine 37, a village established by the Berwind-White Co. near Windber just over the Somerset County line in Richland Township.

Asked if it was different living in a coal town, Rich (also called Dick by acquaintances) replied:

"I never lived any place else. I wouldn't know. All I know, there were a lot of kids there. It was a good place to grow up."

At age 45, Rich still knows only one way to play a tennis match or a racquetball game, sports in which he excells — very competitively.

That fire, that zeal had its roots in Mine 37, which over the years produced a lot of good athletes — among them Charlie and Jim Balogh, the Warshels, the Kormaniks and the Matey brothers, to mention a few.

Dick has no doubt that if he had his youth to live over he would prefer the Mine 37 setting to living on a farm, simply because there were so many young people available to do so much together.

"We used to ski and sled ride. We would sled ride from the top of the hill the whole way through "37" down the road, through the mine to the other side of town without stopping," the memory bringing a smile to his face.

Not all play

It wasn't all fun and games. Dick said there was grass to cut, and he did help his dad saw logs and chop wood from a big pile of timber in the backyard.

But if he wanted to join a pickup game, he said all he had to do was "run up to where we played football and there would be 10 to 15 kids playing football. If you wanted to play baseball, you went to the other end of town and there would be the same number of children playing baseball. There was always something different," he said.

The more experienced athletes graduated to organized contests in which Mine 37 was represented in games with visiting teams from Johnstown.

"Your good football players came from "37," and I think it was because we played all the time," Dick stated.

At the time he was a youngster, basketball did not have the appeal that it has today. He said it wasn't until he was about 18 that the roundball sport started to become popular.

Looking at an aerial photo of the town, Richard determined that Mine 37 now consists of 55 doublehouses, or about 110 families. However, he said 170 to 180 families were there when he was a boy. "And, I don't know any of those places that had just one child," he said. "Each house had two, four or five children. We're talking about four or five hundred children."

"You lived in the company house," he said. "Rent was like $15 a month. They supplied your water. They might even have paid for the electricity. I'm not too sure about that. If you needed steps on your house, they were the landlord and they would come and put new steps on. Every four years, maybe six years, they would come and paint the houses — spray paint 'em — and a crew would come and paint the trim by hand."

Dick said it wasn't until the early '50s that the company began offering the houses for sale. They were sold to occupants of each half of a doublehouse, which led to some interesting examples of coal-town architecture. One side of a house might be painted green and the other lavender, or one side shingled and the other not.

The company houses on the "main drag," according to Dick, consisted of a kitchen and living room on the first floor and two bedrooms upstairs.

"The ones below were a little bigger. They had a large living room, large kitchen and three bedrooms. The ones down by the mine were bigger yet. They had a kitchen, dining room and a living room, and three bedrooms upstairs. They are all torn down now."

Rules of turf

The reminiscing brought back reminders of certain rules of turf which the younger element learned to respect and learned it quickly — sometimes painfully.

"We had our own area where everyone stayed," Dick said. "There was above the tracks and below the tracks. You never walked on the other side of the tracks."

The exceptions were few.

"We used to play football against them and pickup baseball games. Sometimes they would get finished and sometimes they wouldn't," he laughed. "Somebody would start an argument, and that would be it."

Dick said he lived on the upper side of the tracks.

"I used to deliver papers. I had no problem delivering the paper down there . . . and I could collect" . . . But, to cross over just to play or fool around, well it wasn't appreciated," Dick said.

"We just weren't welcome."

Of course the same risk factor prevailed when the boys from the other side of the tracks came to higher ground.

Speaking of a spirit of unity in the community, Dick said it was there but one had to overlook certain "family" feuds.

"They (the men) fought amongst themselves. Friday night, the guys would go out and drink. There would be barroom brawls. The kids would fight, but don't let any outsider come in. It was like a family. You would have arguments within the family, but let strangers step in," and the sentence went unfinished.

Not only was Dick's late father, Stephen, a coal miner, but so were both of his grandfathers.

His dad's parents, John and Julia Sholtis, lived in Mine 37, and his maternal grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Angelo Dominick, settled in Cookietown in the Riverside section.

No review of a coal town would be complete without recollections of the old Company Store. With paths, clearly visible in the aerial photo, crisscrossing from each house to the store, it obviously played an important part in the town's activities.

"My grandmother bought all of their stuff at the Company Store," Dick said. "My parents now and then would go to Johnstown and shop. But, my grandparents on my Dad's side were afraid to shop in Johnstown for fear somebody from the coal mine would see them shopping, and John would lose his job."

Dick remembered the store book in which a record of everything that was charged was recorded.

"You had a company book which I would say was probably three inches wide and maybe eight inches high, and on each page were approximately three stubs. As you bought milk and bread, they marked down so much. When it went down three stubs, they would total it and tear it off, and you would have a carbon copy."

The day of reckoning came on pay day.

Dick said the company maintained the right to take out as much as necessary from the pay check if it believed individual families were charging too much.

If his own parents had been concerned over possibly losing their livelihood for shopping elsewhere, Dick said he never was aware of it.

He said his father had mined coal all of his working life before dying about 12 years ago at the comparatively young age of 53.

"He had just about every bone in his body broken," Dick said. "He had his back broken in a mine cave-in. He lost quite a bit of work. In those days you didn't get paid, although they would let you continue charging at the Company Store and build your bill up. When you got back to work, you paid them back. So, like the song goes, you owe your soul to the Company Store."

Although the coal mine was one place his late father said he didn't want him to work, Dick did give it some thought.

He went as far as going for an interview at the Island Creek Coal Co. in Tire Hill.

While waiting in the office for the manager, he said he had been gazing at photos on the wall and watching miners coming and going. Suddenly the realization hit him that mining coal was not for him.

"I said, that's it. And, I walked out."

Unpleasant memories

Although negative thoughts from life in a coal town are few, Dick has some unpleasant memories of being made to feel like a second-class citizen during his years at Richland High School.

He told about an occasion when a teacher made a reference to kids from "73," and then with a laugh the teacher asked the class if the students knew why he had said "73" instead of "37"?

According to Dick, the teacher explained, "Because they do everything backwards out there."

Dick said one of the Mine 37 boys stood up and said, "I don't have to take that."

All it got him, however, was a trip to the principal's office, Rich said.

In retrospect, he was asked whether he thought his classmates had really looked down on him because he was from a coal town?

"No. I thought maybe they did. But they didn't. Children don't look where you come from."

Old Company Store in Mine 37

This is what the old Mine 37 Eureka Store looked like around the turn of the century. The photo was made available to the Richland Township Sesquicentennial Historical Committee by Dorothy Caldwell of Lydia Avenue, widow of Fred Caldwell. Mrs. Caldwell's late father-in-law, Ralph Caldwell (extreme left), managed the Berwind-White company store. Still standing, the structure is owned by Mervac, Inc., of Windber. In its first year of operation in 1889, Mine 37 produced 1,200 tons of coal. The total mushroomed to 82,700 tons in 1890. Company houses were erected the same year.

Scrapbook suggestion

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#37

Chicken topped turkey in the old days

By James W. Siehl
and Lois J. Siehl

The noble turkey, so much a part of our traditional Thanksgiving Day observance, wasn't always the center of attention in holiday feasts in Richland Township.

Bertha (Yoder) Patrick, a senior citizen residing in the Richland Towers, remembers going to the homestead of her maternal grandparents, the late Hiram and Rebecca (Mullen) Orris, to celebrate the event.

The Orrises' large farmhouse, built before the turn of the century, still is in use along the Elton Road about ¼ miles from the Richland Mall.

Turkey a rarity

"We didn't have turkey very much," said Mrs. Patrick, who recently marked her 76th birthday.

The big turkey farms had not yet made their appearance. Turkeys just weren't very plentiful when she was a girl. And she said it did little good to go into the fields with a rifle expecting to bring home a Thanksgiving Day meal since the wild variety also was scarce.

As explained by Mrs. Patrick, there was little interest in raising turkeys. She said farmers preferred chickens because their eggs were an excellent food source.

Chicken came first

As a result, roast chicken most likely was the Thanksgiving Day speciality in the yesteryears of her youth.

She talked about friends from Johnstown coming to spend the holiday with the family. It was a big trip then, considering the condition of the roads and the state of the early automobiles. Among the guests were Harry Slick, who formerly operated a store along Messenger Street, and Sam Ream and his wife, the former Nettie Myers, a native of Richland Township.

Old wood stove

The recollections brought back visions of food being prepared on a wood stove with a hickory rocking chair at either end. Because the rockers had been placed at the warmest spots in the house, they were very popular, Mrs. Patrick said.

There was no plumbing in the house, which meant a trip outside to get water for cooking and doing the dishes. Mrs. Patrick said spigots had been installed at a spring, which never went dry. She said many times it supplied water for neighbors whose wells failed during droughts.

Homestead changed

The old homestead since has undergone many changes, but when Mrs. Patrick's parents later purchased the property it consisted of four bedrooms and a hall upstairs, and two living rooms and a large kitchen downstairs.

Another native of the township, Harry A. Lehman, an octogenarian residing at 223 Luray Ave., provided additional insight as to how Thanksgiving was observed when he was a boy.

Harry was only four years old when his mother, the former Susannah Custer, died at age 44, leaving her widowed husband to raise four sons and two daughters.

Dad built the house

His father, Isaac Lehman, a carpenter by trade, built a homestead along the Windber-Elton Road near the Berwick Road junction.

No longer in the family's possession, the property has undergone extensive renovations. It now is an attractive residence owned by Jo Vee, operator of a women's apparel shop in Windber. During the remodeling, workers came across an old newspaper in one of the walls. Published 91 years ago in 1892, the paper offers some idea of the age of the house.

A hard life

According to Mr. Lehman, his family didn't have too much of a Thanksgiving celebration. He said life had been very hard and it kept them busy just getting meals on the table and taking care of the everyday chores. Since his father worked as a carpenter, many of the farm duties fell to the responsibility of the children.

Because he was so young when his mother died, Mr. Lehman said he was recruited for a lot of household work.

He said the family usually had a horse, a cow, two or three pigs and about 20 chickens — but never any turkeys.

On special days, he said they would eat one of the roosters from the Plymouth Rock breed of chickens his father favored.

Sisters cooked

Mr. Lehman said his sisters, Emma and Trella, did most of the cooking. He particularly remembers them baking apple and sweet potatoe pies.

At this time of the year, Mr. Lehman said meat was in abundance because butchering always was done in the fall. Butchering was a time of great excitement. He said his brothers and sisters always "bawled and cried when they had to go to school on butchering day."

Not everyone settled for chicken on Thanksgiving Day in those early years in the township.

Martha Bloom of 413 Luther Road, a former teacher in the Richland School District, was one of the exceptions.

The former Martha McMullen, her family moved from Bedford County and settled on a farm near the airport in the township.

She said they had turkey on the big day, and acknowledged that her family was among the few. She said they raised their own wild turkeys.

However, she said assuring the availability of turkey for the holidays was tricky business. It hinged on finding where the hen had laid her eggs, and then removing all but one until the hen was willing to sit on the nest. Those times were infrequent, and if the eggs were left during the interim, Mrs. Bloom said animals would eat the eggs. Once the hen was observed sitting on the nest, the other eggs were returned.

Mrs. Bloom remembered many a morning trailing a hen, hiding behind trees, as she tried to learn where the turkey had hid her nest.

Along with turkey, Mrs. Bloom said her family's Thanksgiving Day dinner included minced pie made with apples and raisins and home-boiled cider. They had their own pumpkins for pies. The only items she recalled having to buy for the dinner were cranberries, sugar and coffee.

The Thanksgiving Day observance always started Thanksgiving Eve with attendance at a special service at Dunmire Lutheran Church, Elton Road, Mrs. Bloom said.

The family would travel the 10-mile round trip by horse and buggy regardless of the weather.

Church came first, Mrs. Bloom said, because the family was so dependent on the land.

She said her family members were very much aware of the gifts from the harvest and the faithfulness of God. She said they were grateful they did have a harvest and that there would always be another spring.

(Another scrapbook photo is on Page 4.)

Scrapbook suggestion

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The old homestead

This old homestead, built before the turn of the century, still is in use as a residence along the Elton Road a short distance from the Richland Mall. It was built by Hiram and Rebecca (Mullen) Orris, who appear in the photo along with Howard "Pete" Lehman, who was reared by the Orrises. The photo was provided by the Orrises' granddaughters, Bertha (Yoder) Patrick and Goldie Yoder, sisters who live in the Richland Towers. The photo was taken in 1909.

Lehman family portrait

Harry A. Lehman, featured in this week's Sesquicentennial Scrapbook chapter, provided this photo of his immediate family. Harry was not yet born when the picture was taken in 1893. His mother died when she was 44 years old. Left to right, the family includes William; father Isaac, holding Frank; Amanda (standing), mother Susannah and Charles.

Ogle Township F.A.N. Club is reorganized

By Dolores Stutzman

The yearly reogranizational meeting of the Ogle Township Friends and Neighbors Club has been held at the residence of Carolyn Toth, Clearshade Drive.

The club, commonly referred to as the F.A.N. Club, was organized during the summer of 1979 by concerned residents with goals of providing activities for what the organizers termed a "somewhat socially isolated area."

The club's prime accomplishment is the fenced playground and picnic area at the community building near Route 56. Through the cooperation of the township supervisors, Windber Recreational Association and donations of time, money and talent, an open field was developed into a functional recreational area.

At the annual corn roast and community picnic in August 1982, the area was dedicated as "Friendship Park."

The club's 1984 officers are Shirley Sendek, president; Linda Blough, vice president; Mary Muzzie, secretary; Sandra Chapasko, treasurer; and Karen Beutman and Sharon Brown, public relations directors.

The Christmas cookie exchange will be held at 7 p.m. Dec. 9 at the residence of Deanna Johnston, Summit Drive.

A Halloween party was held at the community building and was attended by approximately 55 people of all ages. A "Spook House" was part of the activities. Jim and Karen Beutman organized the house.

A green-faced, fanged vampire played by Shirley Sendek, greeted guests at the basement door, guiding them through a dark winding pathway, introducing them to Frankenstein (Deanne Johnston) and mummies (Heather Smith and Tracy McDonald). Carolynn Hadix and Patrick Wirick also were dressed to scare.

Cris Berkey of Windber, an invited guest, shared his spine-chilling talents. Tim Bush and Bobby Sendek aided in construction.

Contest held

The township supervisors, Stanford Seese, William Oldham Jr., and Ray Evans, were judges for a costume contest. Prizes for ugliest went to Crissy Bowser and Crissy Sendek. Jeremy O'Roark and John Kohler were voted most original. Hardest-to-guess was Alesia Newcomer.

F.A.N. meetings are held the second Thursday of each month at 10 a.m. December's meeting will be held at Sandra Chapasko's residence along Clearshade Drive.

Volunteers

Two young people are serving as Brethren Volunteer Service workers at the Church of the Brethren Home. They are Mary Palmer of Colorado, who is serving in the activities department, and Patrick Coppess of Ohio, who is assigned to the maintenance department. Brethren Volunteer Service is a program sponsored by the Church of the Brethren in which people leave their homes to give one or two years of their life in service for the Lord.

The Era
November 22, 1983
Published every Tuesday as a supplement to The Tribune-Democrat. Business and editorial offices: Box 386, Windber, Pa. 15963. Phone 535-6634.

Thankgiving greetings

Olive Wingard, Republican Party leader in the township, has shared these old Thanksgiving postcards with the Richland Township Sesquicentennial Historical Committee. The bottom card was postmarked Nov. 29, 1907. Signed R. B., the sender wrote: "Pigs love pumpkins, cows love squash. I love you. I do by gosh. Answer soon." The card in the upper right corner was distributed by Arbuckle's Ariosa Coffee. On the back, it featured cooking notes for preparing deviled turkey, fricasseed turkey, boiled turkey and roasting turkey with chestnuts.

Brethren Home lists its activities

The Church of the Brethren Home has announced a calendar of events for today through Nov. 30 as follows:

Today — Singalong, 10; slides of California by Leo Harrold, 1:30.

Nov. 23 — One-to-one, 9; painting activities at fifth and sixth stations, 10; ceramics, 1.

Nov. 24 — Thanksgiving service with the Rev. Millard Weaver, 10.

Nov. 25 — Bible study, 10; Mass, 10; social hour, 1:30.

Nov. 27 — Church school, 10; worship with Wilbur Fischer, 2:30.

Nov. 28 — Physical fitness at third, fifth and sixth stations, 10; bingo, 1:30; discussion group, evening.

Nov. 29 — Singalong, 10; residents meeting at fourth station and crafts and Christmas cards at first and second stations, 1:30; residents meeting at third station, 3.

Nov. 30 — One-to-one, 9; tapes at fifth and sixth stations, 10; ceramics, 1.

Pantry aids families

The Windber Area Food Pantry completed its first year of operation at the end of October.

During the year, the pantry provided food to 770 families, with a combined total of 2,811 people. The amount of food given amounted to 25,299 meals served.

It has been estimated that the pantry is spending approximately $700 each week to purchase the food that is being distributed.

Volunteer schedule

The auxiliary to the Windber Hospital and Wheeling Clinic has announced its schedule of volunteers for next week. Phone all cancellations to Hazel Burnworth. The schedule follows:

Monday — Kathleen Fogle, Marjorie Wagner, Bernadine Babus, Debbie Mattis, Melissa Snyder and Mary Marhefka.

Nov. 29 — Connie Cassanese, Lois Linehart, Jo Wozny, Donna Heidorn and Michele Wissinger.

Nov. 30 — Gertrude Schreyer, Julie Oceak, Christine Wozny and Lisa Weyandt.

Dec. 1 — Jenny Negest, Dorothy Mock, Bee Hobba, Betty Campitelli, Jessie Mitchell and Lisa Gojmerac.

Dec. 2 — Jean Dobis, Wendy Marino, Helen Vargo, Eleanor Sipko, Mary Decker (off), Caralee Marcinko and Jenny Cordutsky.

Attention
WINDBER CABLE TV CUSTOMERS
Effective immediately WTBS will be on Channel 12 & WPSX Clearfield will be on Channel 13.

ATTENTION
WINDBER BORO RESIDENTS
Snow Removal Parking Will Go In Effect
Monday, Dec. 5, 1983, and continue thru March 25, 1984.
There Will Be No Parking On Graham & Somerset Ave. From 4th St. to 23rd St. Between The Hours Of 2 A.M. To 7 A.M. Nightly.

#38

Hershbergers prominent in Richland

By James W. Siehl

and Lois J. Siehl

Seventy two years ago, Samuel I. Hershberger, a member of a prominent Richland Township family, and his wife, the former Mary Livingston, also a native of the township, were counting their blessings. They were celebrating their golden wedding anniversary. Samuel was 72; his wife, 73.

According to an account carried in the local newspaper, the couple were surrounded by relatives and friends to the number of more than half a hundred. Continuing, the story stated:

"The venerable couple threw their home open to the guests and there was unadulterated joy and happiness from morning until late at night. An elaborate dinner and supper were served. The older people gathered during the day and spent the time in recalling reminiscences of other days. The evening was given over to the young people and the house literally rang with the laughter of the happy crowd. The aged celebrants were the recipients of handsome and beautiful presents."

A busy man

S. I. Hershberger made his mark as a farmer, contractor, Richland Township road supervisor and educational leader. He was re-elected to the Richland School Board 100 years ago.

His parents, Isaac and Rebecca (Fye) Hershberger, came to Cambria County from Lancaster County. Isaac Hershberger served as justice of the peace in Cambria County for 52 years.

Isaac Hershberger, the newspaper article states, "at one time owned practically all of what is now the 17th Ward. The price of the land, which was overgrown with elderberry and blackberry bushes, was about 65 cents. Squire Hershberger in his time was one of the most widely known men in this section of the state."

Oil fever

Except for a brief time, Samuel Hershberger resided in the Geistown vicinity. In 1895, when the oil fever broke out in Venango County, he worked as a carpenter and helped build the first oil-well derricks in the Oil City region.

After returning to his farm in Richland Township, he and Rebecca were married March 24, 1861. Mrs. Hershberger was the daughter of David Livingston. Her grandfather, David Livingston, fought in the War of 1812.

As a contractor, S. I. Hershberger constructed many buildings in Johnstown.

Nine children were born to the couple's union. They included:

Emma Jane, wife of Charles Helsel; David M., who married Lizzie Eichensher; John, who married Lizzie Trevarrow; Mary, who married Elmer Berkey; William G., who married Alice Blough; Sadie, who died at age five; Elizabeth, wife of John Blough; Samuel Jr., who married Kate Snyder; and Isaac, who married Arvilla Stonebreaker.

A contractor

William G. Hershberger also became a well-known contractor, learning the carpenter trade as a young man. For many years, he operated the Levergood Street Garage in Johnstown under the company name of Hershberger & Strayer before engaging in the general contracting business in Geistown.

William Hershberger's wife was the daughter of John W. and Mary (Keim) Blough. Her grandfather, John "Hans" Blough, was a prominent Somerset County resident.

William G. and Alice Blough were married Sept. 21, 1893. Their children included:

Ira, born Feb. 8, 1901, a graduate of Geistown High School (married the former Irene Ickes); Stanford, born March 6, 1903, a graduate of Geistown High School, attended Pennsylvania State Normal School; Erma, born Nov. 22, 1905, graduate of Richland Township High School and Indiana State Normal School; Merle, born June 6, 1908; Mary, born Oct 16, 1911; and Charles, born May 25, 1914.

All but Stanford and Charles are living.

Father built houses

Erma, widow of Paul Shumaker, resides at 2744 Bedford St. in a house built by her father. Ira settled in North Madison, Ohio; Merle, in Mentor, Ohio; and Mary (Hershberger) Kiefer, in Cape Coral, Fla.

Isaac Hershberger's land holdings at one time also included a large parcel along the old Bedford Pike from Geistown toward the Luther Road junction. That property eventually was divided among three of Isaac's sons. Besides Samuel, Isaac had four other sons — John, David, Daniel and Jacob. The latter was killed while serving in the Civil War.

Samuel Hershberger donated the ground upon which the Bethany United Methodist Church, Leventry Road, is situated. It was founded as the Bethany United Evangelical Church.

Anniversary feast

This festive occasion at the Geistown home of Samuel and Rebecca (Fye) Hershberger was part of a daylong celebration in March of 1911 commemorating 50 years of marrried life. Samuel (with full beard) and his wife are seated before a scrumptious table of taste delights. On the rear wall at the right of a curtainless window is a wall phone of the period. Of interest, too, is the mantle clock and beside it a statement of the family's faith. The inscription reads: "Christ is the Head of this House . . . the Unseen Guest at every meal . . . the Silent Listener to every conversation." Seated (left to right) are Stanford Hershberger, Ira Hershberger, Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Livingston, Emma (Hershberger) Helsel, Samuel I. Hershberger, Mary (Livingston) Hershberger, Alice (Blough) Hershberger (holding Merle Hershberger), Samuel Hershberger (holding John Calhoun), Mollie Kern (holding Victor Hill), Mabel (Layton) Hershberger, Myrtle (Hershberger) Malzi and Elizabeth (Hershberger) Blough. At right, the children seated in front are Ida Livingston (left) and Erma (Hershberger) Shumaker. At left, camera shy Ruth (Berkey) Gerber is hiding under the table. Standing (left to right) are Dora (Helsel) Calhoun, Ida (Helsel) Hill, William G. Hershberger, Malinda (Livingston) Berkey, John Blough, Stella (Groover) Koontz and Charles Helsel. The house at 2771 Bedford St. is still in use. It is owned by Stanley Tallyen.

Scrapbook suggestion

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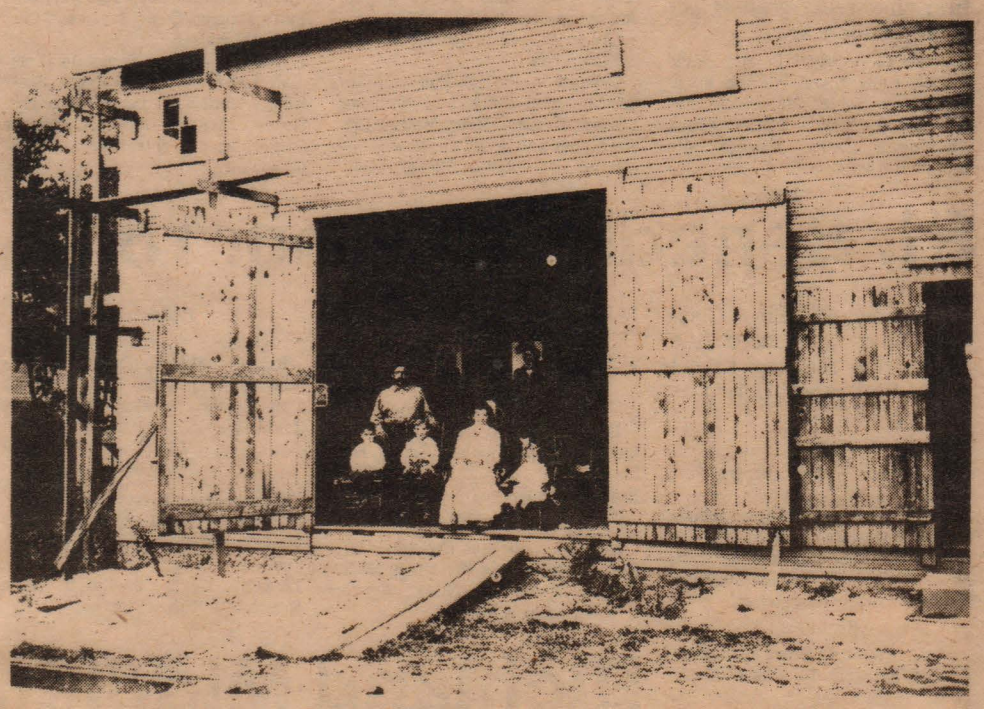

Barn was home

William G. Hershberger, a carpenter, and his wife, the former Alice Blough, and their four children were living in this new barn when the photo was taken in 1907. The children (left to right) are Stanford, Ira, Merle (in his mother's lap) and Erma. The barn was located on ground now occupied by the educational wing of Bethany United Methodist Church, Leventry Road. Erma, widow of Paul Shumaker, related that her late father built the barn and her family stayed in it while her father built a new home for his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Samuel I. Hershberger. When the house was completed, the William G. Hershberger family moved into the homestead of Erma's grandparents, also along Leventry Road. The new house is the same one featured in the accompanying photo.

#39

Blough name is prominent in Richland's history

By James W. Siehl
and
Lois J. Siehl

Pages of history are difficult to turn back, but Robert L. Blough of Johnstown R. D. 3, whose Richland Township roots predate its 1833 founding, has made a noteworthy try.

A descendant of a large family linked prominently not only to the cultural and economic growth of Cambria but also Somerset County, the local lawyer has been able to reacquire all but 20 acres of a 160-acre tract of what had been farmland owned by his great-great-grandfather, Samuel Blough.

Robert and Peggy Blough reside in a garden of flowering shrubs and beautiful pines in a surprising rural setting in spite of the close proximity of nearby residential homes in the Belmont area.

Their house, standing alone along the side of a shallow basin, overlooks the foundation of the former homestead built by Samuel Blough. Deer from neighboring woods are frequent visitors, browsing on the fruits of Mr. Blough's considerable horticultural efforts — literally hundreds of rhododendron and azalea plants.

In beauty and scope, Mr. Blough's artistic concepts have the mark of professionalism. Much time has been spent in cross-pollinating his own rhododendron and azalea specimens — some of which have won prizes in inter-state competition.

The property fronts Kring Street near the junction of Parker Road. At one time, the farm was on both sides of Kring Street. According to Mr. Blough, his brother, Earl W. Blough, bought 25 acres of the original farm in the '50s. Then in 1962, Mr. Blough said he started reacquiring the land, and finally four years ago was able to buy all of the undeveloped ground still left of the tract. The remaining 20 acres across Kring Street had been developed residentially, and of course are not available for purchase.

Year older

The original land deeds of Samuel Blough are a year older than the incorporation date of 150-year-old Richland Township. Those deeds were recorded in Somerset County in 1832. Additional property in the Arbutus vicinity was purchased in 1858 by John Blough from Peter Keim at the price of $15 an acre.

In any historical research of Richland Township, the Blough name and its original spelling Blauch keep emerging, identifying that family in many areas of growth.

There were two Blough schools and a Blough cemetery. Bloughs served on the school board and in the ministry in the early development of the township. There was even an ointment — distributed widely by John Henry Blough — used in the treatment of "cuts, bruises, chaped hands and piles." The ointment, its ingredients a guarded secret, still is in use. Old John Henry called it "Reliable Salve."

Among the prominent Mennonite families in Richland Township when this picture was taken prior to 1890 were John W. and Mary (Keim) Blough. They were active in the Weaver Mennonite Church, Scalp Avenue. Land from property purchased by John W. Blough from Peter Keim eventually was donated as the site of Arbutus Park.

In 1884, Samuel Blough's son, also Samuel, was ordained as a minister in the newly built log Weaver Mennonite Church, an historical church still functioning at the same site along Scalp Avenue.

At that time, the Joseph S. Blough, John S. Blough and John W. Blough families also were members of the congregation.

Samuel Blough was ordained bishop in 1878. According to Stanford Shetler's "Two Centuries of Struggle and Growth of the Mennonite Church," Bishop Blough "was well liked both as an earnest speaker and a good visiting pastor." He died in 1883 at the age of 55.

Robert Blough's grandfather, John Henry Blough, was ordained as minister of the Weaver Church in 1882.

Bloughs heavily populated the two-county area by the turn of the century, as in evidence by a story which appeared Sept. 11, 1908, in The Daily Democrat-Johnstown. The article began:

"With the brightest of skies, a pretty park, an interesting program and enough people to populate a small village in attendance, it is no wonder that the first annual Blauch-Blough family reunion held yesterday at Arbutus Park was one of the largest and most successful in this section of the state.

"The first reunion was one that augurs well for the affairs to be held in succeeding years, for, although the notice was short, a crowd variously estimated at between 1,000 and 1,200 people was on the grounds during the afternoon."

According to the story, people came by train, walked from the ends of streetcar lines and traveled by private conveyances, including vehicles and horse and buggies.

This old farm homestead at the corner of Kring Street and Parker Road in Richland Townsnhip was built before the turn of the century by John Henry Blough, an ordained minister of the Weaver Mennonite Church. The property was part of a 160-acre tract of land purchased 151 years ago by Samuel Blough, great-great-grandfather of Earl W. Blough, current owner. In 1900, John Henry Blough retained 10 acres of land surrounding this house and sold the remainder of the tract to W. H. Henningcamp. All but 20 acres of the original tract have been reacquired by Earl Blough's brother, Robert.

Family historians record that among the immigrants who came to the new world in the middle of the 18th century were two men, Christian Blauch and Hans (John) Blauch, whose names are on the immigrant rolls in the archives of the state library.

(Tradition has it they were brothers, and that Christian had at least three sons — Christian, John and Jacob, all under the age of 15.)

They sailed from their mother country, Switzerland, on the ship "Brotherhood," commanded by Capt. John Thompson, and landed at the port of Philadelphia Nov. 3, 1750. The ship transported 300 passengers.

There is a listing of Thomas and Richard Penn, the proprietors and governors of the province of Pennsylvania, issuing a patent for 171½ acres of land in Lebanon Township, Lancaster County, to Christian Blauch. It was recorded Nov. 7, 1761, in the patent book. Blauch paid the equivalent of 130 American dollars.

Christian Blauch, a brother of Jacob, moved to a farm near Berlin in 1767. He was born in Berne, Switzerland, in 1743, and died in 1777 at the age of 43, leaving eight children. This limb of the Blough family tree became known as the Berlin branch.

Jacob Blauch, possibly the youngest of the original Christian Blauch sons, settled in Somerset County in 1790 and located at the Quemahoning Creek. His descendants are known as the Quemahoning branch. Jacob resided in Lancaster County during the revolutionary war.

A big man

Jacob, a man of fine physique, weighed more than 300 pounds and stood over six feet in his stocking feet. He raised a family of nine children. Jacob, the oldest of his sons, preached the first sermon in Paint Township, Somerset County, and became the first bishop of the Mennonite Church in this district.

Although the Blough or Blauch ancestors used the German language before leaving Berne for this country, it is possible they were of French descent and perhaps French Huguenots, according to the 1908 newspaper story.

As one of the featured speakers in the first Blauch-Blough reunion, Jonathan Blough of Hooversville, who was then 83, told about the struggles of the early settlers.

He mentioned the difference between the present age and the time when he was a boy, noting that when a young man became old enough he was expected to strike out for himself and establish a home.

He gave a graphic picture of the old-fashioned log house with the clapboard roof and the stone fireplace and crane. He detailed the clearing of land and emphasized the fact that all work was done by hand, as there was no machinery in those days. He spoke of the family as being a determined people that took up their share of opening the then new country.

Scrapbook suggestion

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#40

Here's how Luther Road in Richland got its' name

By James W. Siehl
and
Lois J. Siehl

Luther Road, a short but heavily used Richland Township artery connecting busy Scalp Avenue (Route 56) and the Elton Road, derives its name from a family member whose ancestors were among the early pioneers who settled in Ligonier Valley in Westmoreland County.

Both Luther Road and Bob Street, another short spur running parallel with Luther Road, draw their names from the late Robert McElroy Luther, a farmer and businessman in the township for many years.

A. Ted Luther, one of 12 children born to Robert and Ellen (Weaver) Luther, was born Feb. 12, 1901, on the farm of his parents. The farmhouse, which was torn down in 1965, had been built along Bob Street within view of what is now Cherry Lane's junction with Luther Road.

Mr. Luther remembers when the road to the Luther farm was no more than a horse and buggy, dirt trail which branched off the Bedford Pike (a toll road) and went over Cherry Lane to the Elton Road.

Then in about 1913, he said farmers on Rachel Hill (the Richland Mall section), seeking a shorter way to the Weaver Mennonite Church on Scalp Avenue, received permission from R. M. Luther, Jeremiah Hershberger and Solomon Yoder to build a new road from now Cherry Lane to the Elton Road.

Just 3 farms

At the time, Mr. Luther said there were only three farms in that particular area. Besides his father, his maternal step-grandfather, Daniel H. Yoder, and Jeremiah Hershberger also had working farms.

Some of the families who assisted in building the new road, according to Mr. Luther, were those of Levi Wingard, Peter Wingard, D. S. Yoder and Solomon Yoder.

Ted Luther and his wife, the former Violet Smith, before moving in 1978 to a cottage at Arbutus Park Retirement Community, resided at 403 Luther Road. They built that house and resided there 53 years, rearing two sons, Jay and Roger, and a daughter, Shirley Kissell.

Memories of life in the old homestead where he grew up still are vivid with Mr. Luther, a retired former employee of the Berwind-White Coal Mining Co. and Cambria Leasing Co.

With such a big family, bedrooms were at a premium. Mr. Luther recalled that he and several brothers slept year 'round on a second-story porch with nothing but sack material stretched over the open end between them and the outside elements.

Mr. Luther said they would undress inside and then make a bee line to get under a comfort filled with duck and chicken feathers. According to the octogenarian, the feathered ticks were more than adequate to keep him warm.

His memory also goes back to pre-electricity times when the family depended upon kerosene lamps and later acetylene gas for illumination.

Explaining the latter, Mr. Luther said an "acetylene plant" — an energy source — was established in the cellar. A highly flammable gaseous hydrocarbon was produced by allowing calcium carbide to drip into a vat of water. The gas then was piped to several lamps in the house and also to the barn. Mr. Luther said ignition was provided by pressing a button which released a spark from a battery and lighted a flame.

The old farmhouse had a gravity water system to furnish running water throughout the house and to flush toilets. Mr. Luther said water was pumped once a day from a spring below the house into a 75 to 100-gallon tank in the attic.

Thoughts, too, came back of taking two horses and a wagon loaded with grain and driving to Thomas Mills in Somerset County to have the grain ground into flour.

"I'd leave early in the morning, and it would take all day until I got back," Mr. Luther said. "Then we would have buckwheat flour. We would have buckwheat cakes for breakfast every morning in the winter time. Sausage, pudding and buckwheat cakes, that was our breakfast," he said with obvious relish.

Looking back on some of his boyhood fun time, Mr. Luther laughed and said on a particularly cold day, he and his brothers and sisters took delight in taking advantage of a youngster not schooled in country ways. There was a game, Mr. Luther said, in which they feigned interest in capturing an "elpawdritch," a fictious small animal. The object was to convince the greenhorn to wait beside the barn while the others chased the elusive critter in his direction. Meanwhile, the others had dashed into the warm house while the butt of the fun patiently waited in the frigid air until becoming cold enough to go inside.

Were Mennonites

Ted Luther's parents were faithful members of the Mennonite Church. Robert Luther taught school for 18 years. For many years, he was a trustee of the Richland Cemetery Association. Mrs. Luther was active in the Pennsylvania Society of Farm Women. Their marriage of 61 years ended in 1954 when Mr. Luther died at the age of 81. His widow lived another 10 years and died at the age of 91.

Ted Luther's great-grandfather on his mother's side of the family, Moses B. Miller, was for many years a bishop of the Amish Mennonite church.

Moses Miller, who married Susanna Harshberger, had a farm in the location of a Patwil model house along Bedford Street. The Millers' daughter, Mary, married Henry Weaver. They had three children, one of whom was Ellen, Ted Luther's mother.

Ted Luther has followed his father on the Richland Cemetery Board of Trustees, and still is an active member.

Referring to the minutes of the trustees' annual meeting held in January 1913, Mr. Luther said the board included A. Baumgardner, S. I. Hershberger, A. Hostetler, D. H. Yoder and R. M. Luther.

Interestingly, eight lots were sold in 1912 at $7.30 each. There were 21 interments, with total receipts of $69.95. Expenses were $8.85.

The cemetery was organized in 1863 and incorporated in 1892.

Mr. Luther's grandfather, John A. Luther, was born May 7, 1846, in Ligonier Valley. He graduated from the Eclectic School of Medicine in Cincinnati, Ohio, and practiced medicine for nearly half a century.

In the Civil War, Dr. Luther was a member of Battery D, Fifth Pennsylvania Heavy Artillery. His father, John, and many uncles, also served in the battery.

Dr. Luther married Lydia Trexel of Somerset County Oct. 2, 1870, and set up a medical practice in Scalp Level. Robert M. Luther was their first child.

Ted Luther remembered that physicians then were expected to also practice dentistry, and that his grandfather had worked on his (Ted's) teeth.

The Luthers in America trace their origin to David Luther, an Irishman who came here and located in eastern Pennsylvania. Because the Indians were so dangerous, the first of the Luther family to settle in Westmoreland County returned to the eastern part of the state.

Later, as more immigrants began moving westward, the Luthers came back to Ligonier Valley and established themselves in what is now known as Luther Valley in West Fairfield Township. Some of the original 300-acre tract still is owned by Luthers.

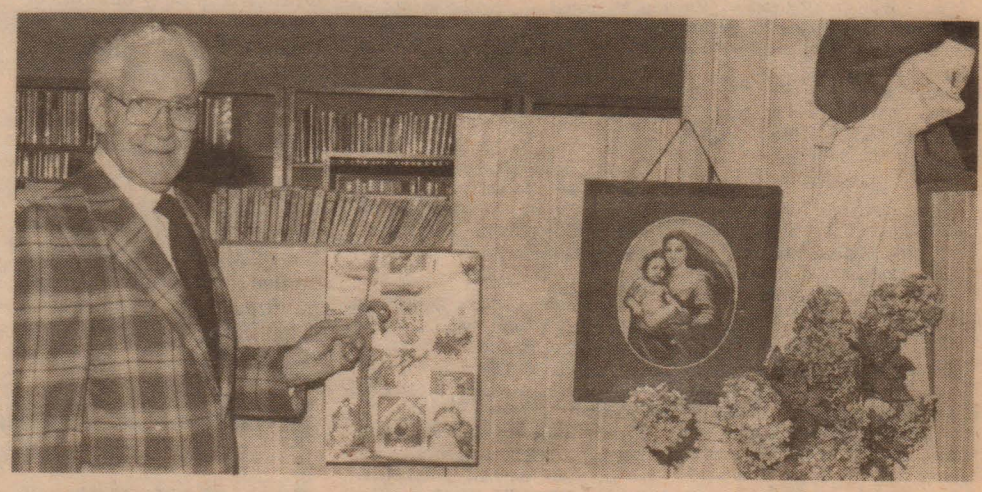
In the family of David Luther, native of Ireland, a son, David 2nd, was born in Philadelphia in 1794. He came with his father's family to Ligonier Valley and located in Luther Valley.

A Luther portrait

A. Ted Luther, who now is 81, was just a boy when this family photo was taken in an orchard off the Luther Road in Richland Township. At the right, Ted is the one standing with his father's hand on his shoulder. Left to right, the group includes: Mary (Miller) Weaver Yoder (Ted's grandmother); Daniel H. Yoder (Mary's second husband); Lee Veil (boy in rear); Mary Veil (Miller); Susan (Weaver) Veil, holding baby Ruth; Alvin Veil; Newton Luther (behind Alvin); Ellen (Weaver) Luther (Ted's mother), holding Lydia Belle Luther (Caldwell); Bruce Luther (standing behind Ted); Robert M. Luther, holding Elizabeth Luther (Kniss); and Daniel Luther. Four additional children were later to be born to Robert and Ellen Luther. Besides Ted Luther, still living are Ruth, Newton, Lydia Belle, Elizabeth and Daniel.

Luther anniversary

This photo of the late Robert M. and Ellen (Weaver) Luther was taken on their 50th wedding anniversay Dec. 25, 1942. Luther Road and Bob Street were named after the former farmer and school teacher.



Mr. Luther at library

"Christmas — Forever New" and Richland Township's sesquicentennial year is a combined theme in this month's interest center at the Highland Community Library, Luray Avenue. A. Ted Luther, featured in this week's Sesquicentennial Scrapbook chapter, draws attention to the victorian style. Posted is this 1865 meditation by Charles Albertson: He is the Ancient Wisdom of the world; the Word Creative, Beautiful and True; the Nameless of Innumerable Names; Ageless Forever . . . Yet, Forever New.

#4

Weaver house in Richland has stood test of time

By James W. Siehl
and
Lois J. Siehl

A handsome farmhouse standing in a field across Luray Avenue from the Richland Greens golf course is one of the oldest structures in Richland Township.

"As near as I know from what my Dad used to say, it was built in 1864," said Herman O. "Dutch" Weaver, who along with his wife, Winifred, and Mr. Weaver's sister, Mabel, occupy the property.

Despite the passing of nearly 12 decades, the distinctive house with two-story porches in both the front and the back shows little sign of aging.

Mr. Weaver, for many years a road supervisor in the township, said the house was constructed by "Joeley" Blough. "I only ever heard him called Joeley," said Mr. Weaver before calling upon his sister's memory for assitance. Mabel identified the builder as Joseph Blough, apparently the same Mennonite farmer who had bought a large tract of land in that area. Many years later, Arbutus Camp Ground was built on land donated by Joseph Blough's heirs.

According to Mr. Weaver, the supportive structure of the house is composed of massive frame logs, as found in the old barns. He said planks were then nailed in vertical position to form the siding, followed by another row of planks (thus the term "double-plank house.")

Has 10 rooms

The 10-room building has four bedrooms, an attic and a full basement. It measures about 36 feet square, Mr. Weaver said. "The house is not hard to heat," he noted. "I still use coal. I have a stoker. I touch it once a day, and it runs off a thermostat."

Mr. Weaver said he has done considerable remodeling, installing paneling and lowering 9-foot ceilings.

As for his house being among the oldest in Richland, Mr.. Weaver said, "I don't know of many older. They are all torn down by now. The old log house along Kring Street near Parker Road is probably older."

According to Mr. Weaver, his grandfather, Peter Hoffman, had purchased the farm consisting of about 60 acres from Joseph Blough in 1903. He said his grandfather had been interested in the coal on the land and eventually sold it to the Berwind-White Coal Mining Co.

Fortunately, Mr. Weaver added, a lot of the ground didn't have coal under it — fortunate in the sense that there never was any problem with sinkage.

Some years later, the farm was purchased by Mr. Weaver's parents, Stephen and Emma Jane (Hoffman) Weaver. They reared a family of six sons and two daughters . All but two — Ortha and Warren — were born in the homestead. The oldest sons were born in a farmhouse near Scalp Level.

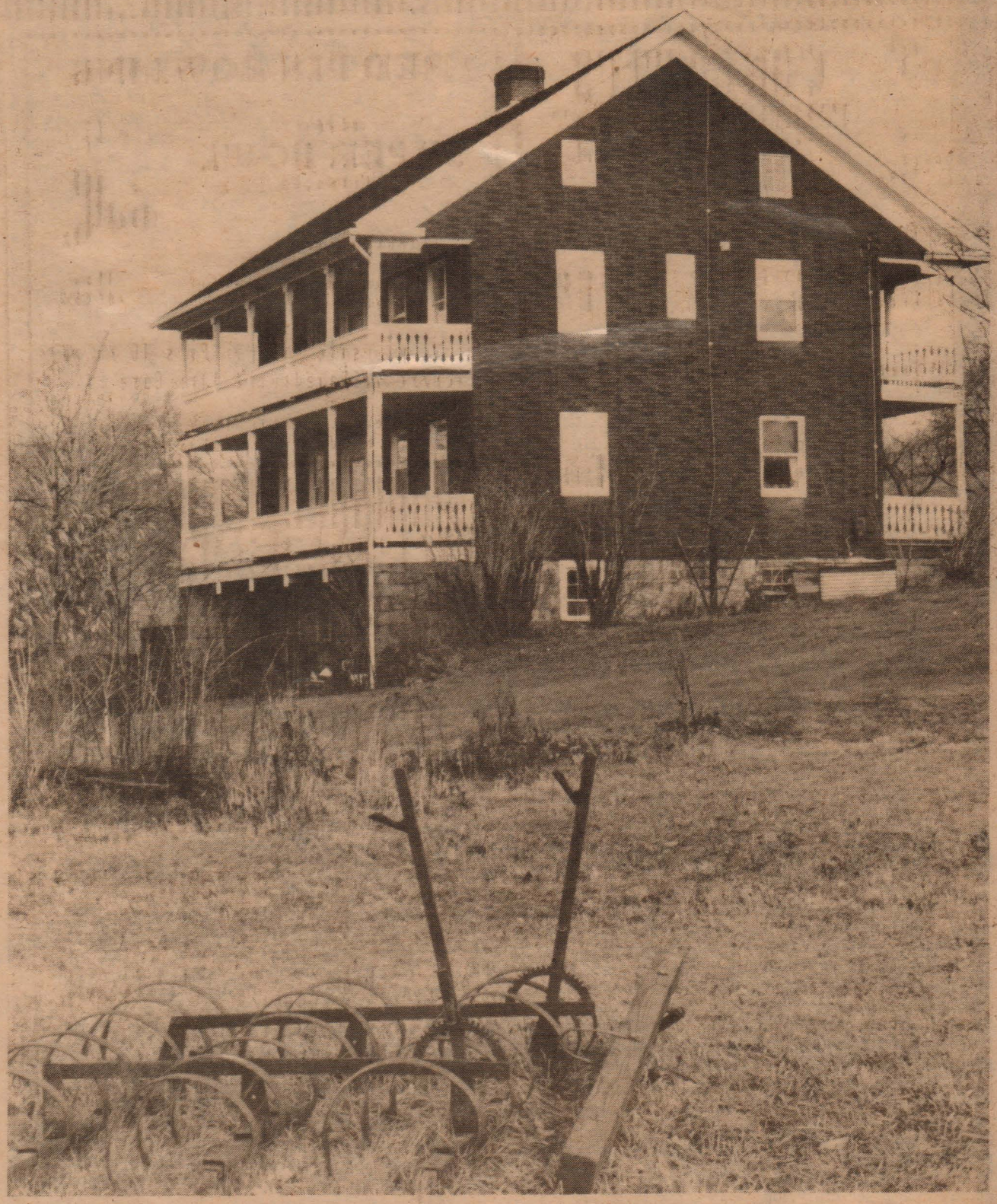
Mr. Weaver's brothers and sisters are all living. The others not mentioned include Alvin, Emerson, Maurice and Zella. Dutch is the "baby" of the family.

According to H. O. Weaver, his father had a few cows and a truck farm while he was going to school. But after he graduated, his father went into dairy farming in a big way. (The golf course is built on former pasture land.)

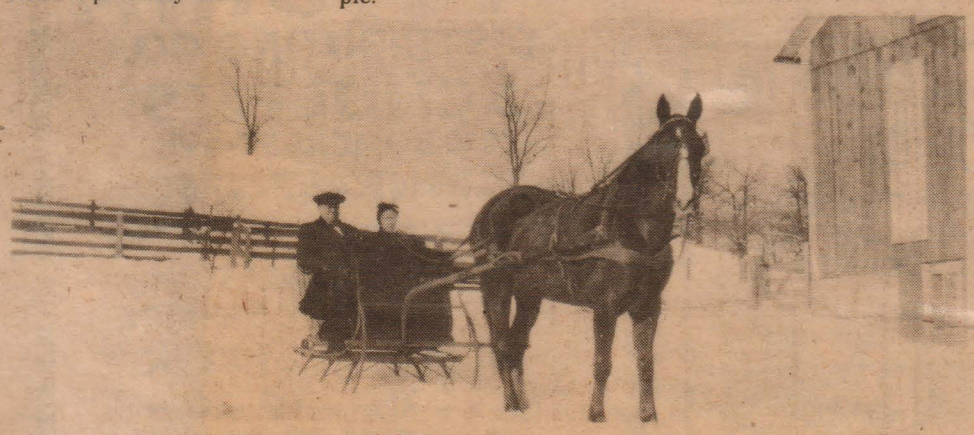
With the yuletide holidays approaching, Mr. Weaver was asked if his family had celebrated Christmas in any unusual manner when he was young?

"Nothing out of the ordinary," Mr. Weaver replied. "Dad and Mother always tried to get us a little something. It was never anything elaborate."

While the Christmas experience at the Weavers was for the immediate family, Mr. Weaver said sometime between Christmas and New Year's Day there was a big gathering of his mother's brothers and sisters and their families at his Grandfather Hoffman's farm near Scalp Level. "It was customary to bake a pig," Mr. Weaver recalled. "They would get one that dressed about 70 pounds, fill it and then take it down to a bakery in Moxham." The baked ham provided the main course for some 45 to 50 people.



One of Richland Township's oldest dwellings



A sleigh scene

Pictured in this sleigh scene from a postcard are Mr. and Mrs. J. T. Eash, formerly of Johnstown R. D. 4. In 1914, they used this novel approach to invite Mr. and Mrs. Peter Wingard of Richland Township to visit them over the Christmas holidays.

A half-century old

This is a sample of Christmas postcards in vogue a half-century ago. The card was addressed to Homer Wingard of Johnstown R. D. 3, and signed, "From Howard. Answer soon." The card is the property of Oliver Wingard.

#42

This one-of-a- kind house has a storied past

By James W. Siehl
and
Lois J. Siehl

A one-of-kind, five-gable house with double porch fronting a section of the old Walsall Road on Eisenhower Boulevard has a storied past.

Back when the area was known as Rocky Hollow and the property was called Jacobs' Grove, gentlemen and their lady friends would travel by horse and buggy, by streetcar, by train and by foot to enjoy good times at the wooded spot in the country. One of the current occupants, Ann Jacobs, whose late husband, Anthony Jacobs, was a grandson of the builder, said as many as 400 and 500 people would come to the grove on Saturdays and Sundays to have fun and enjoy potato and corn roasts.

"They used to bring their girlfriends up in buggies," said Mrs. Jacobs. "Those who couldn't come in buggies would travel the Windber streetcar. There was a train house. For a nickle or a dime, they would come out on the train, get off and walk from Krings on up here."

According to Mrs. Jacobs, many times people who had missed the streetcar to Walsall would take the next one going to Windber, get off near Ingleside and cross the creek by a swinging bridge.

Water high

"They (the young women) would take off their shoes. That's how high the water was on that swinging bridge," Mrs. Jacobs said. "And then when they got on the other side they'd put their shoes and stockings back on."

According to the widow, William Jacobs and his wife, Catherine, constructed the 13-room, two-story, frame structure. They operated a restaurant on the premises, serving meals in a large dining room. A big dance floor was a popular attraction along with a bowling alley set up in the woods in the rear.

Getting a fix on when the house was built is difficult. Mrs. Jacobs, who has been residing at the site since 1938, said the dwelling is more than 100 years old. Another source places the year it was erected at about 1870.

Emma (Eash) Jacobs, soon to be 92, a daughter-in-law of the late builder, is unable to pin down the year. She and her late sister, Sadie, both worked at the restaurant, and the sisters wound up marrying Jacobs brothers.

Emma Jacobs, who resides on Johnstown R. D. 7 with her daughter and son-in-law, said she was 16 years old when she married William Jacobs in 1908. Looking back 75 years ago, she said the house had been in in existence for sometime but she could not estimate how long.

Tracing the ownership of the landmark structure, Ann Jacobs (Emma's niece) said Grandpap Jacobs sold the property to Angelo Morelli (spelling uncertain). He ran a tavern at the location until selling it to the Lorain Steel Co., predecessor of the United States Steel plant in Moxham. The steelmaker, which operated a coal mine at Walsall, converted the house into three rental apartments. Mrs. Jacobs said Lorain Steel officials had not approved of alcoholic beverages being sold at the site, which she said was a factor in the decision to acquire it.

When the company decided to sell the property in 1938, Anthony and Ann were given the first opportunity to buy it. "They wanted to keep it in the Jacobs family since it was the Jacobs homestead," Mrs. Jacobs said. "So, we bought it."

The price

The price was $1,800.

"For 10 years, I bought this place at $28.50 a month," Mrs. Jacobs disclosed. "That included my insurance and everything. When it was all said and done (counting interest), it was $3,600."

She said the house payment was deducted in half-month payments of $14.25 from her husband's U. S. Steel paycheck. The recollection brought back memories of her husband getting one or two days' work in a two-week period. "I would have 54 cents left after they took out their fourteen dollars and a quarter."

Shortly after moving into the house, Mrs. Jacobs and others in the vicinity lost their water supply when coal mining operations changed the watertable.

"I had no water here for 10 years. I would pray for it to rain and I'd catch the rain water. I would take vats and little tubs. For 10 years I lived like that."

Finally, she said, the neighbors combined their efforts and dug a water line through the woods to the Arbutus section, where they were able to tap onto a Windber supply.

Mrs. Jacobs resides on one side of the house and her son-in-law and daughter, Barry and Janice Ott, and their young son, in the other half.

There has been substantial remodeling in the interior. Nine-foot ceilings have been lowered. Until the Otts moved in, there had been no bathroom and no bedrooms upstairs in their side of the house.

The main entrance used to be in the middle of the house. However, the entrance has been moved to the left to make room for a picture window.

The original poplar siding still covers the plank house.

"It sure does," said Mrs. Jacobs. "And, it's just like new. We had a roof put on, and we took off the old roof. Those boards were just like the day the house was built.

Still in use

This fine old house, more than 100 years old, is still in use along Eisenhower Boulevard. When this photo was taken in about 1908, it was a popular restaurant known as Jacobs' Grove. There was an outside dance floor and a bowling alley under a pavilion. William Jacobs, who built the house, is standing at left on the second-story porch. His wife, Catherine, is on the right at ground level. The photo was provided by Ann Jacobs, owner of the property. Her late husband, Anthony Jacobs, was a grandson of the builder.

Scrapbook suggestion

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A war-time holiday

Memories of Christmas past aren't always times of joy. Not everyone looks back upon festive family get-togethers with their traditional gift-exchanges and food delights.

Robert Naugle of Solomon Run Road, Johnstown R. D. 2, recalls one particular Christmas back in 1918 or 1919 when the nation was at war with Germany.

He remembers it because his mother, the former Mary Carney, was very ill. She was a victim of an epidemic outbreak of influenza — one of the worst in the country's history.

Mr. Naugle said his mother was ill for a number of months, and that his father, Simon Naugle, had to have someone come into the home and help with the housework.

According to Mr. Naugle, his mother had been born in Old Conemaugh Borough. He said when she was 10 years old she went with her parents out west in a covered wagon and resided in a sod hut in Nebraska and Arkansas for several years before returning to the Scalp Level area in 1917.

Mr. Naugle said his father in 1927 bought a piece of property near Coles Crossroads in the township, cleared the land and built a house. Mr. Naugle has resided there ever since.

As a boy, Mr. Naugle remembers his father going to a store in Windber to do his Christmas shopping. He said the family mostly received the clothes they needed. There was never more than one toy, he said.

Mr. Naugle's wife, the former Twila Kelley, was born in Elton, daughter of Frank and Bessie Lehman.

For Mrs. Naugle, the yuletide season brings back memories of word spreading like prairie fire among the boys and girls that Mrs. Harry Ickes had her cookies ready.

Mrs. Ickes was the postmistress in Elton for many years, and each Christmas she baked cookies for the Elton young folk.

From 1910

This is another sampling of holiday postcards people enjoyed sending years ago. It is part of a collection of Olive Wingard of 126 Ridgeview Ave. The 1910 New Year's greeting was sent by Sidney Yoder, who now is residing in Middletown, Dauphin County, to the late Homer Wingard of Johnstown R. D. 3. Homer was a brother of Mrs. Wingard's late husband, Dorsey. Mrs. Wingard's cards have been featured in this special sesquicentennial series.

#43

St. Benedict's School had a humble start

By James W. Siehl
and
Lois J. Siehl

Over the years, people have had a lot of good-natured fun over the misspelling of St. Benedict on the corner stone of a brick school building which was opened in 1921 by the Geistown parish.

The Sisters of St. Francis have enjoyed the faux pas as much as anyone. And, Sister Phyllis, current principal, is no exception.

"I never noticed it," she said. "I was here two years before a visiting nun pointed it out to me." (See the erroneous "I" in accompanying photo).

Demonstrating her sense of humor, Sister Phyllis took delight in the fact that the blunder had been carved in stone. "It took time to do that," she chuckled. "I even looked it up in the Latin to try to find a way out, but there is no way you can cover that one up." Then she laughed again and said, "We do teach spelling here."

A careless mistake, however, can no way diminish the educational and religious impact the school has had on the community.

Since the opening of that building 62 years ago, two additions have been constructed. From a humble start in which the enrollment was hardly more than a score of pupils, St. Benedict's currently has 375 students from kindergarten through Grade 8.

Dates to 1911

The history of St. Benedict's school dates back to 1911. At that time, Catholics living in Geistown had been attending Mass at St. Joseph's in Johnstown. Because of travel inconveniences, they sought and received permission from Most Rev. Bishop Garvey to use St. Benedict's Chapel in St. Joseph's Cemetery for regular services. The cemetery had been purchased in 1889, and the chapel built in 1893.

With the first services in the chapel May 11, 1911, Geistown became a mission of St. Joseph's Church. The following September, the Rev. Maximillian, O.S.B., took charge of the Geistown mission.

Establishment of a school immediately became his first priority. A generous parishioner offered to build the school on his own property at his own expense. The cost was $800. Other members donated desks and a stove. On Oct. 31, 1911, Father Max, as he was familiarly known, blessed the little frame school and dedicated it in honor of St. Benedict. Six days later, the school opened with 22 boys and girls who were taught by a lay teacher.

The small one-room wooden school served the parish until increasing enrollment brought about a decision in 1921 to build a new school. This was followed by a call for Sisters. In September 1921, Sister M. Mildred Helbling and Sister M. Aloyse Pressler took over the school, traveling daily from the convent attached to St. Joseph's in Johnstown.

Because the new building was not yet available, the Sisters divided the children into two groups. The younger ones were instructed in the frame school while the more advanced students received lessons in the chapel.

The new school consisting of two classrooms was formally opened Dec. 1, 1921. Father Max, who had not been in the best of health, did not have long to enjoy his achievement. He died three years later.

When Geistown was incorporated as a borough in 1930, the Benedictine Fathers turned the mission of St. Benedict's over to the Most Rev. John J. McCort, bishop of the Altoona-Johnstown Diocese. Increasing membership prompted the bishop to declare the parish an independent congregation, which led to the appointment of the Rev. Cletus Baronner as pastor.

Chapel purchased

Immediate consideration was given to a need for a church building. Members purchased the chapel and had it moved from the rear of the cemetery to a plot of ground on the Bedford Pike (site of the present edifice).

Then there was the matter of providing living quarters for the Sisters, who no longer could stay at St. Joseph's Convent. The problem was partially solved when a member of another faith, Mr. Briney, Geistown chief of police, offered his furnished summer home as a temporary dwelling. The two-story frame building was located in a grove of silver oak facing the Bedford Pike, about a three-minute drive from the church and school.

Three Sisters, with Sister M. Constantine Turnher as Superior, moved in Nov. 14, 1930. The following summer, the pastor secured a house opposite the school for the Sisters. Since then, the church and school has made steady strides.

A St. Benedict's class

These boys and girls, attending the 1922-23 term at St. Benedict's School, Geistown, were members of the Palmer Method Class of Writing. Remember the technique? No finger movement. Wrist and forearm flat on the desk. Arm and hand moving as one from the elbow. Sister Mary Mildred was the teacher. The students with the diplomas had just graduated. With the class is Father Maximillian. He was the first priest to lead the Geistown mission church of St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Johnstown. The photo is the property of Mary Katherine (Dravis) Leffler of Johnstown R. D. 5, a descendant of Joseph Geis, founder of Geistown. Left to right, the class includes: Front — Madeline Schulyer, Cyril Fisher, Catherine Ruth, Margaret Freidoff, Magdalen Ruth, Bernard Heinrich (holding pennant), Margaret Himmer, Millie Gennet, Petronella Abler, Robert Widman and Elizabeth Ruth. Back — Charles Ruth, Mary Katherine Dravis, James Hetzlein, Agnes Boyle, Aloyse Freidoff, Father Max, Florence Freidoff, Magdalen Schreyer, Rose Gennet, Helene Heinrich and Edgar Wonders. James Ruth, father of the Ruth children in this photo, was the first burgess of Geistown Borough.

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Three Sisters, with Sister steady strides.

#44

Log house believed Richland's oldest structure

By James W. Siehl
and
Lois J. Siehl

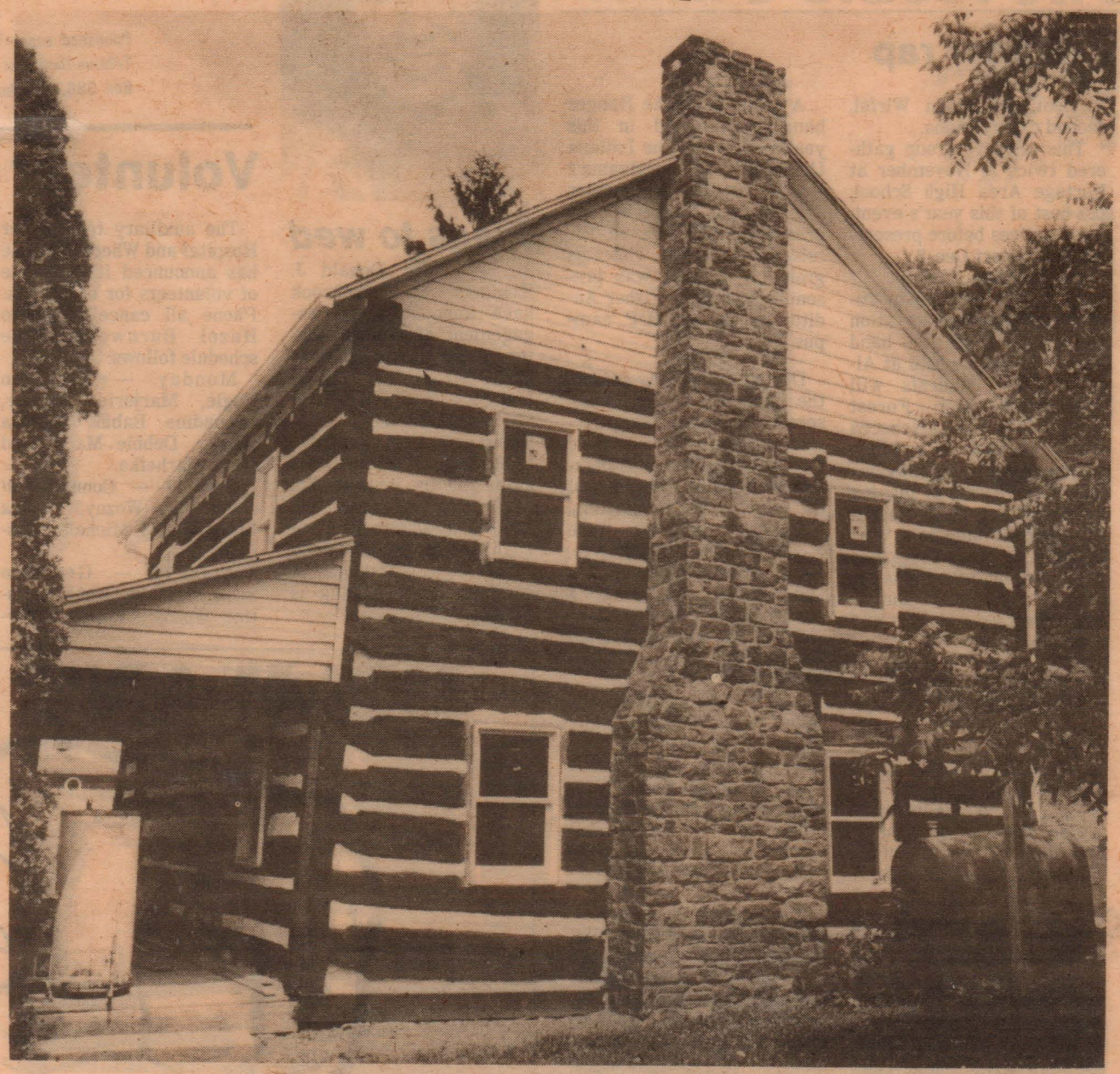


Photo by Dean Maxwell

Log house has been around a long time

A log house along Kring Street built nearly 150 years ago is believed to be the oldest structure in Richland Township.

For more than a year, it has been undergoing extensive remodeling by two brothers who spent their adolescence in a house across the street. They are Thomas and Greg Weimer, two of six sons born to Leroy and Louise Weimer of 114 Kring Street.

Thomas Weimer is an investment broker residing in Altoona. Brother Greg, a former school teacher, resides in Connellsville. He now makes his living buying real estate, renovating the properties and making them available for rent.

According to Leroy Weimer, a retired laboratory technician at Johnstown Plant, Bethlehem Steel Corp., his sons, with assistance from another member of the family, have been doing the work themselves. However, the responsibility has fallen chiefly on Greg's shoulders. Mr. Weimer said Greg has been averaging about four days a week on the project.

"If they were to go back over it today," said Mr. Weimer, referring to his sons' decision, "in view of what they have learned they might have second thoughts," he chuckled. "But they have had a good time. They bought it in March 1982, and actually didn't start to work on it until the middle of the summer of '82."

Believed to have been constructed between 1834 and 1837, Mr. Weimer said he suspects the age of the property was one of the factors which "spurred the boys into the idea of buying it. They had grown up with it across the road from them. They were familiar with it. And, whenever they heard it might possibly be for sale the two of them said, ' Let's buy that log house.' "

Former owners

The former owners were Kathy and Douglas Jones, who had to relinquish their own desires to remodel the structure when Douglas lost his job as part of the unemployment crisis which struck the district.

Kathy is the granddaughter of Carrie Hoffman, a niece of former Pennsylvania Gov. M. G. Brumbaugh and widow of Jacob M. Hoffman, the former land developer who built more than 800 homes in the area.

According to Mr. Weimer, Jacob Hoffman purchased the log house in 1933 and occupied it until building a house on a neighboring lot. Mr. Weimer said he suspected that Mrs. Hoffman had given the log house to her granddaughter.

Hanging noted

A history buff by his own admission, Mr. Welmer said the man who built the house hanged himself from a tree on a hill at the rear of the property. "His grave is over here in Blough Cemetery," he added.

The builder with the untimely end was Peter Keim, whose ancestor, John Peter Keim, a native of Baden, Germany, arrived at the port of Philadelphia on Aug. 31, 1750, aboard the ship, Nancy Thomas. It had sailed from Rotterdam. John Peter Keim, a single man, settled in Berks County. He married in 1776 and became the father of eight children.

One of his offspring, Samuel Keim, married Anna Blough, daughter of Jacob Blough and granddaughter of Christian Blough, who had sailed from Switzerland on the ship, Brotherhood, and arrived at the port of Philadelphia Nov. 3, 1750. Samuel Keim located in Dauphin County before moving to Somerset County. He and Anna had nine children. The couple's remains as well as those of Jacob Blough are buried in a cemetery near the Quemahoning Dam Bridge.

Samuel Keim was the grandfather of Peter Keim, builder of the log house. Peter Keim's father, Samuel Keim II, married the former Catherine Speicher, who was born in 1808. Five children were born from their union.

Interestingly, the land upon which the log house was built has a history dating back to July 5, 1774, when a 150-acre tract known as "The Hemfield Addition" was surveyed for Michael Kuhn. The land was situated in the head of a run flowing into the east side of the Stony Creek about a mile and a half from the Samuel Adams plantation, which then was known as Stone Coal Bank in Quemahoning Township — then a part of Bedford County.

Mr. Kuhn purchased the property from John Penn Jr. and John Penn, governors of Pennsylvania, for the price of seven pounds and 10 shillings sterling.

Through a series of transfers, the tract was owned by Henry Hill, George McCall, John Brumbaugh and David Miller before the latter sold the property in 1823 to Samuel Keim. In 1834, Peter Keim bought 77 acres of the ground from his father for the site of his log house.

Restoring the old property has been fascinating to Leroy Weimer. "I haven't done a great deal of work," he said while conducting a tour, "but I have supplied a surprising amount of material."

Mr. Weimer is impressed by the condition of the wood in the old place, which was fashioned from foot-square chestnut logs.

"In reality," he said, "I would venture that the wood from which this house is constructed is worth more than the property. It is solid chestnut. I mean like flint. Twelve-inch chestnut doesn't exist anymore. Even three-inch chestnut doesn't exist anymore. These logs are so solid that if the place was dismantled and the logs were sawed up, that lumber would be worth a fortune because it's something that is one of a kind."

According to Mr. Weimer, his sons have tried to preserve what they could of the original construction at the same time making realistic concessions to the cost of today's heating bills.

One of the features are the deep, attractive windows — a result of the 12-inch chestnut logs, Mr. Weimer explained. He noted that from certain vantage points outside the house the windows appear crooked. "But the window's aren't crooked," he laughed. "Naturally, they have to be plumb."

The plan

The renovated plan includes a combination living room-dining room with a kitchen, large foyer, laundry room and powder room downstairs. Extending from a large entrance hall at the top of the stairs are three ample-sized bedrooms and a bathroom. The house also has a full attic and basement.

Pointing to beautiful, refurbished, dark beams in the living room, Mr. Weimer said they are part of the original construction. A fireplace wall and another in that room had been paneled with original wood in the house and stained.

When the house was built, Peter Keim took advantage of a generous spring behind the house, which as far as Mr. Weimer knows has never been dry. The water was routed from the spring through a wall in the basement feeding a spring house, where the family was able to keep perishable items cool, and out the front.

The foundation was constructed of clay and stone. Cement used as fill for a stone foundation supporting a porch on the front of the house was proof the porch had been built later.

According to Mr. Weimer, the only bad deterioration took place in the vicinity of the spring house, where the moisture caused two logs at the base to rot. They were replaced.

Mr. Weimer said the house should be ready for occupancy within several months.

Asked if there was a chance that the property would be offered for sale, Mr. Weimer laughed again and said, "I don't think it will happen while I'm still here."

#45

Up, up and away in East Hills area 57 years ago

By James W. Siehl

The year was 1927. Charles Lindbergh, a national hero, had soloed in his historic flight across the Atlantic Ocean. The country was going crazy over aviation. Acrobatic barnstormers flying fabric-covered biplanes were attracting large throngs with their stunt-flying and offers of rides for a fee.

The period still lives in the mind of Bernard Gleisner of Geistown, a retired mechanic. From his home at 2648 Bedford St., Mr. Gleisner painted vivid word pictures of that summer 57 years ago when he and an opportunist from Detroit, Mich., decided that they would cash in on the airplane transportation business.

And, that is how a Richland Township cow pasture on the farm of Homer Wingard in the vicinity of Schoolhouse Road became the forerunner of aerial flights from the East Hills. But, that's getting ahead of the story.

When he was about 22 and a budding garage mechanic working for the Overland Gougeon Co. in the city's Old Conemaugh Borough section, Mr. Gleisner said he had entered into a partnership with George H. Belanger to purchase an airplane.

Mr. Belanger, who then was 45, had come to Johnstown from Detroit interested in buying a farm and raising onions. In the meantime, he had taken a job at the Gougeon garage, where he learned to appreciate young Gleisner's automotive skills.

They believed

According to Mr. Gleisner, an enthusiastic response the previous year to an appearance here by the Gates Flying Circus had convinced them people would spend money for a chance to ride in an airplane.

Barnstorming across the country, Mr. Gleisner said the Gates Flying Circus attracted a lot of attention by looping, turning and spinning their crafts, at times dropping aerial bombs, and featuring wing-walkers. Mr. Gleisner told about being at the old Westmont airport owned by the Cambria Steel Co. and seeing a man standing on an oil drum selling tickets while a line several-hundred-people long waited to pay $3, $5 and $10 for a ride.

"Their plane could haul four passengers and the pilot. They were here about a week and had seven planes in the air at one time. They must have cleaned up a nice piece of change," Mr. Gleisner said.

During the winter of 1926-27, Mr. Gleisner said he and his partner sent out postcards to companies advertising airplanes for sale in "Aero Digest." "They had second-hand airplanes like automoible dealers have used cars now," Mr. Gleisner noted.

The partners narrowed their choice to an Army surplus Standard J-1, which had been used for primary-flight instruction during World War I although the United States did not fly an aircraft in combat in that conflict.

According to Mr. Gleisner, companies bought up the WW I surplus planes and spare parts. "They called them dumps," he said. "They bought that whole dump, and they sold it cheap in order to unload it and make some money."

Following up one of the brochures they received in the mail, the Belanger-Gleisner duo drove to Marshall, Mo., where they purchased a Standard J-1 for a bargain price of $1,011 from the Nicholas Beasley Co. The going price was about $6,000. The company, according to Mr. Gleisner, had four warehouses full of engines, propellers, parachutes, tires . . . "anything related to old World War I surplus planes."

Mr. Gleisner said he and his friend personally selected the component parts — first the upper and lower wings of the biplane (they had their choice of 400 wings), then a new 90 hp OX-5 engine (from a group of 400) and finally the fuselage.

Preparing for takeoff

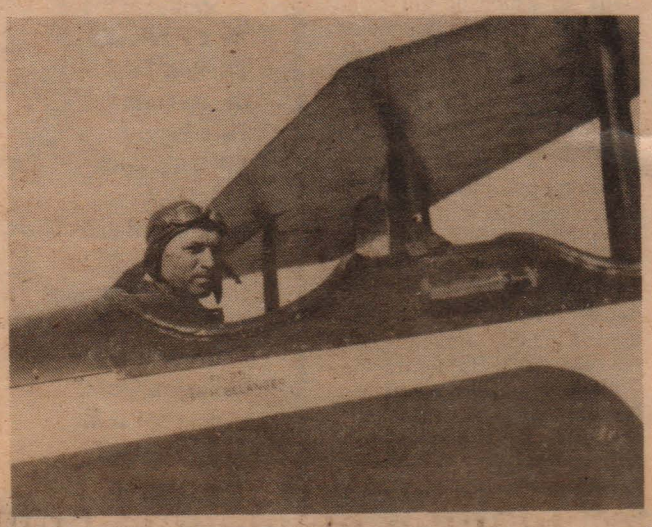
Pilot George Belanger and his daughter, Gloria, are preparing for takeoff from a Richland Township cow pasture.

Scrapbook suggestion

Readers of The Era may want to keep their own scrapbook of published pictures and stories about people and past events in Richland Township. The Era is carrying a series of features from data collected by the historical committee as part of Richland Township's sesquicentennial celebration.

To gain the experience, Mr. Gleisner said he sought and received permission to work at his own expense with plant personnel in assembling the craft.

The fuselage had no cover, just the bare frame. Although laminated wood sometimes was used, Mr. Gleisner said the fuselage usually was covered with material — much like a bedsheet or grade A linen. A mixture, clear like molasses, which he referred to as "dope," was then applied to the surface in three coats. Working in the sunlight, Mr. Gleisner said the wet, sagging cloth would dry quickly. And, with each application the material became tighter and tighter.



Pilot Belanger takes off

Mr. Gleisner said the Standard J-1 had a wing span of 43 feet, 10 inches, with the lower wings about six feet shorter. It was 26 feet, seven inches long and weighed 2,045 pounds.

Took lessons

While Mr. Gleisner was assisting in assembling the plane, his partner, who had never operated a plane, began taking flying lessons from the company test pilot. Taking with him $168 in spare parts, Mr. Gleisner said he drove the car back to Johnstown while the test pilot and Mr. Belanger flew the plane back.

Mr. Gleisner said Cambria Steel officials told them they could use the Westmont airport but only until they found a field where they could keep it.

"We wanted a place to go up there after work during the remaining daylight and on Sundays. That was going to be our big day," Mr. Gleisner said. "We took off one evening and flew around Johnstown to see if we could find a field close to a busy highway — a suitable place to pick up passengers. That's how we found that cow pasture. We made a deal with the farmer (Homer Wingard) to use the field that summer. We offered to give him 10 percent of whatever we took in. He moved his cattle to another field."

Following the example of the barnstormers, Mr. Gleisner said Sun Oil Co. agreed to supply all of their fuel and oil for advertising on the plane: "We use 100 percent pure Pennsylvania oil and Blue Sunoco gasoline."

"We started to fly up there Sundays," Mr. Gleisner went on. "We would fire the thing up and fly around Elton, Salix, across Franklin, across the city, Moxham, Windber and St. Michael. About the time we got back to the field, the cars would start coming in. People came in from all directions. Lindbergh went over in May and we had this up there in July. People were air-minded. Every place anybody had an airplane to haul passengers, everybody wanted to ride in it. The price was right. Anybody could afford it. Just so they could say they had a ride in an airplane, well $3 wasn't much to spend for a ride in something they had never been in."

Mr. Gleisner said they had 1,000 tickets printed — 700 $3 tickets and 300 $5 tickets — and started one Sunday hauling passengers.

He said George would make a big circle around the city going up from 150 to 1,000 feet and come in for a landing.

"We would have to keep the cars lined up to keep them off the field," Mr. Gleisner said. "They wanted to park every place. As soon as the plane would stop, everyone would come flocking around it. They wanted to see it. They wanted to touch it, know its name, how much it cost. We had an awful time keeping them away from it. And, all the time the propeller was running."

Mr. Gleisner's job was to sell tickets, get the two passengers in the plane for each flight and buckle them in. About every third trip, he said he dumped in five gallons of gasoline. Depending upon the price of the ticket, passengers were airbound about 10 minutes or 15 minutes.

Cracks up

Mr. Gleisner said the enterprise was doing well until one day while George was taking off, an overhead radiator obstructed his view and he didn't see a cherry tree. The plane caught the top of the tree, spun out of course and hit an embankment, tearing off the landing gear, breaking the prop and smashing three wings. It was practically a total loss.

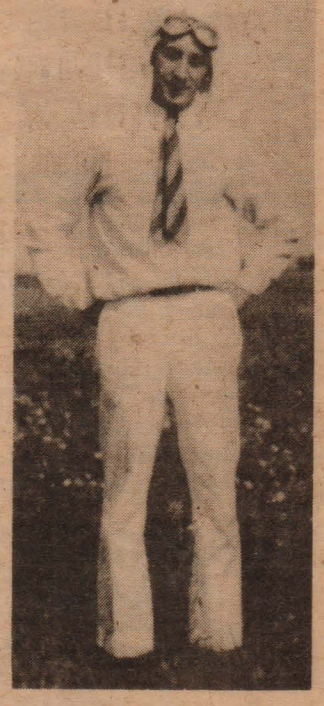
Mr. Gleisner said they ordered three new wings right away. By the time they arrived about a week later, Mr. Gleisner said he had repaired one of the lower wings and the fuselage, put on a new propeller and rebuilt the landing gear. The extra parts he brought back from Missouri came in handy, and the plane was back in the air.

In addition to selling tickets, Mr. Gleisner had one other important function. He helped draw crowds by walking around on top of the wing and hanging by his feet from the axle of the landing gear.

Sitting on the axle with his feet hooked around a fly wire, Mr. Gleisner said he would snatch a handkerchief from the top of golden rod as the plane swooped close to the ground.

Once George landed the plane while Mr. Gleisner was astride the axle — much to the latter's surprise. It was an incident he said that helped him realize that if he were to live to be an old man he would have to get away from George Belanger — that and a few more crackups.

"It was the first airplane he ever flew. And, he wasn't too good at it," Mr. Gleisner said with a laugh. He was 45, and that wasn't the best age for a fellow to be full of pep and ambition. He was kinda wild until he learned to fly one of them things."



Bernard Gleisner

. . . in 1927

With the approach of fall, the aircraft was put into storage and the partnership came to an end. It was for economic reasons. Mr. Gleisner said he couldn't afford the crackups. George, who died in 1971, took on another mechanic-partner, and the next summer flew the plane from a farmfield at Salix.

As for Mr. Gleisner, he never lost his interest in flying, but remained on the sidelines as an avid observer while completing a 42-year career as a mechanic in Chevrolet garages at Central Avenue and Valley Pike.

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#46

Don Fyock and aviation history go hand-in-hand

By James W. Siehl

He was a teen-ager when he soloed. Seventeen when he shared ownership of an airplane. And, still just a kid when in a rented plane he set down on an unpaved runway at the yet-unopened Johnstown Airport to claim the distinction of being the first.

Probably nobody in Cambria County has a better background on the history of local aviation than Richland Township native Don Fyock, who while closing in on 60 never has lost his fascination for flying following those early youthful accomplishments.

Don grew up on a farm which is now part of the Johnstown-Cambria County Airport. He still resides on the airport fringe, occupying an old remodeled farmhouse which had been moved during grading of the airport in 1940.

"The house was built in 1905," said the former Richland School District teacher. "I know exactly because it's on one of the beams down in the basement." The farmhouse had belonged to the Peter Hornick family.

Don explained that he had been residing in the family homestead in 1958 when the property was acquired during extension of the airport runways. The old Peter Hornick house, which previously had been moved during the original excavation, was available. Don had it moved to a 25-acre tract he purchased near the animal shelter along the Airport Road.

The family homestead also was moved to an adjacent lot. That house, built by Cornelius Berkebile, is well over 100 years old, Don said.

Originally, the majority of the airport ground comprised land that had been farmed by Peter Hornick and Martin Hornick. The parcel also included small sections of the William H. Fyock (Don's father) and Harvey Bloom farms and a section owned by the Berwind-White Coal Mining Co.

Ground broken

Ground was broken June 6, 1940, and it took exactly six months to the day to complete the landfill and grading operation, according to Don.

His recollections go back a few years earlier when John Kostora and a few others, who had flown off the old Westmont airport, had rented part of the Peter Hornick farm.

"Those fellows I remember very well, because I was a kid then. I used to go out and watch them fly."

He said the group had three or four planes which they hangered at New Alexandria, Westmoreland County, and flew to Richland Township for the weekends. In addition to Kostora, who had managed the Westmont airport, Don said Dr. Norman Mendenhall and Andy Peterson were fledgling pilots then.

Don said Dr. Mendenhall owned a Luscombe, a small two-place, all-metal craft. Peterson flew an Aeronca Chief, which Don described as a fabric-covered, high-wing, two-place plane.

"Then there was an Aeronca C-3. It was used for instruction," Don recalled. "It was a 37 h.p. fabric-covered airplane also. They also had a Kinner Bird, built by Brunner-Winkle Co. That was an old bi-plane (double wing). John Butler flew that plane a lot. Another fellow who was flying out there was Cy Bowman. He was a mechanic around here until not so many years ago, and Bowman must be pushing 100. He resides in a Moose Home in Florida."

With his interest in aviation whetted by aircraft taking off and landing from virtually his backyard, it was a natural step to taking flying lessons at the Ebensburg Airport. He soloed July 7, 1941, a year before graduating from Richland High School.

How he became owner of his first airplane at the age of 18 is an interesting tale.

According to Don, John McKool, who later operated the Silver Drive-in Theater, Scalp Avenue; Earl Weller and his brother, Lee, of the Weller Dairy family; and John Plummer of Sidman owned a 40 h.p. J-2 Taylor Cub — a forerunner of the Piper Cub.

"Being considerably older, they started going into the service before I did," Don said. Plummer went into the Air Force and he came home on furlough before going overseas, and I bought John's share of the plane. I was 17 at the time." He said he paid $50 for the share.

Mckool was the next to go, as Don remembered, and he wound up paying $60 or $75 for his share. He became the full owner when the Weller brothers bought a Luscombe before they went into the military and sold him their shares. This all happened within a year.

He knows better

Although Don said he has heard others say they had been the first to land at the Johnstown airport, he said he knows better.

Before there was ever any runways on it, he said his farm looked like a trailer camp occupied by construction workers who were operating heavy machinery. One of the workers he had gotten to know one day told him that if he really wanted to come down the unpaved runway it was smooth as it was going to get.

"I went flying at Ebensburg. I took off in a J-3 Cub I had rented, and I shot a landing because I had made my mind up the time they started that if possible I was going to be the first guy to ever land on it. I have heard other guys say they were the first, but they weren't. I know. At the time, it was illegal to do it," Don laughed, "but I did it. I made hay on that place, and I landed on the place."

Don made a point of mentioning that the late Alfred K. Young, formerly of the Somerset Pike, and the late Clarence Hammerle, who operated a dry-cleaning business in Johnstown, were instrumental in the airport becoming a reality. "They did a lot of the leg work," he said, and added:

"The airport wasn't open for business, so to speak, until after the war when in 1946 they finally got a fixed-base operator. Martin Gracey was the first manager under Graham Aviation. Bill Graham of Pittsburgh was the first operator of this airport."

Noting that one of the runways had been finished before the war, Don said the airport never was on any of the air charts until 1946. During the war, he said occasionally, military planes would come in and land either because of one of two things:

"Sometimes it was weather. Sometimes they got confused because this airport was not on the map, and they would wonder where they were. So, they would set down to find out. Living on a farm next to it, of course, I was aware of practically everything that came in and out of here at that time. If one set down and I was at home, I probably was the first one on the scene.

"I can remember P-51s (fighter planes). I can remember a Martin Marauder that came in here one day and landed. No sooner did he get down and a terrific thunderstorm let loose. He didn't know where he was. He said he had tried to land across the mountain (Martinsburg) . . . made a couple of passes . . . but never got it down (not enough runway). Came over here and saw this thing right in front of him. Said he didn't know where he was . . . wasn't on the map."

Residing so close to the airport enabled Don to watch the pony express of the air in operation. As a result of the airmail pickup site being moved to the Johnstown airport from the Westmont field, Don many times watched the old Stinson Reliance planes zoom low, pick up the mail on the fly and drop off a bag for local delivery.

"They picked it up right along the road right at the edge of the farm," Don said. "If they encountered fog, sometimes they would come in and land at Johnstown and wait the fog out. They would taxi up to the end of the runway, which was about 1,000 feet from our house, and they would walk down to our house and call Pittsburgh to report they were down. They would sit in my Mom's living room, and I would get to know some of those guys."

Any chronicle of early aviation in Richland Township must include mention of the Ola family, according to Don. Mr. and Mrs. Frank Ola and their children resided along Oakridge Drive in the vicinity of the American Legion Home. Three of their sons entered the military service — two before and one after the start of World War II.

Michael Ola, a Naval flyer, was killed in an accident in Illinois in the late '30s when the plane in which he was not piloting struck a radio tower.

His brother, George, was a pilot in the U. S. Air Force. A retired colonel, he is residing in Florida. Another brother, Louis, flew in the Air Force during the war, according to Don. A sister, Allison Ola, became a stewardess for United Airlines.

Fyock also served in the Air Force during World War II. "Unfortunately," he said, "I was not in the right place at the right time to fly. Most of the time I was in personnel work."

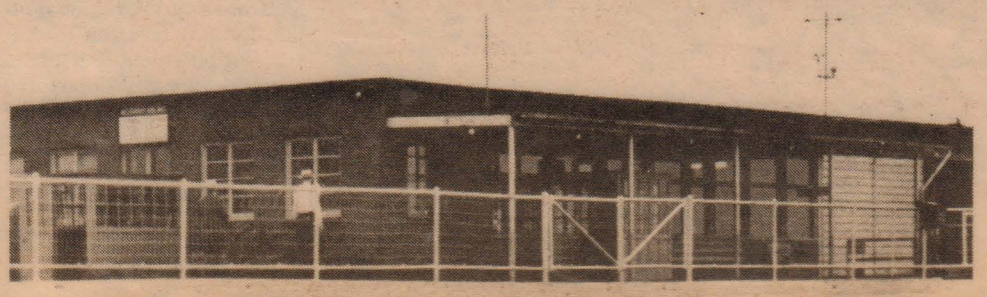
When Graham Aviation took over the operation of the Johnstown airport in 1946, Dale George of Johnstown R. D. 3 came here as assistant manager. Mr. George was in charge of instructing an airplane mechanics class. He also assisted as a flight instructor. The instructions were available for about two years until a hanger fire complicated the operation.

Kostora, the former manager of the Westmont airport, now is 80 years old and residing in Florida. According to his brother, Lee H. Kostora of 2230 Spear Ave., John is retired from the Federal Aviation Administration.

Lee, a retired regular Army colonel, said his brother left Johnstown shortly after Bethlehem took over the ground of the former Westmont airport to teach British and West Point cadets how to fly. One of his pupils was Gen. Robin Olds, an ace in World War II, the Koran Conflict and the Vietnam War.

The Fyock residence

This old farmhouse was built in 1905 by Peter and Julia Hornick (in photo) on a farm that now is part of the Johnstown-Cambria County Airport. The house twice was moved. Since 1958, when the airport runways were extended, it has been situated adjacent to the animal shelter operated by the Humane Society of Cambria County, Inc. The property was renovated by Mr. and Mrs. Donald Fyock, current occupants.



. . . early photo of first terminal at Johnstown airport.

#47

He wants to return 2 "old birds" to the skies

By James W. Siehl

A dream of returning two old birds to the sky remains a fixed goal for Don Fyock — aviation historian, licensed pilot, airplane mechanic and collector of antique relics of a flying age all but a memory.

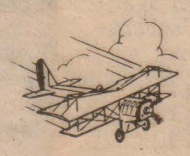
Now 59, the Richland Township native resides in a 78-year-old farmhouse along the Airport Road on the fringe of a farm on which as a boy he was able to share the excitement of events that shaped this area's early love for flying. The Fyock farm, along with the Martin Hornick and Peter Hornick farms, constitute much of the land making up the Johnstown-Cambria County Airport.

Although there are others in his stable of former queens of the air, Don has special feelings for an old SR-10 Stinson Reliant — one that had been used by All American Aviation in its novel "pony express" air-mail pickup system — and the "bones" of another Stinson model of which there are only three others in existence — all museum pieces.

A 50-by-50-foot steel building, a shed once used to stable horses, a shop and a garage — all bulging with parts, wings and fuselages — bear mute evidence of Don's penchant for the past.

"If I live to be 105," the former Richland school teacher said with a laugh, "I'll get it all done."

Don flies a 1946 J-3 Piper Cub, which he and his son, Brian, also a licensed airplane mechanic, rebuilt in



1976. Don has a 1941 Piper Cub coupe, which he said in those days was considered Piper's deluxe model. "We have that one to the point that we hope to re-cover it this summer."

Don's interest in the Stinson SR-10 stems from the years he watched the high wing monoplane zoom low at the edge of his farm, pick up a bag of mail on the fly and drop one off.

First pickup

According to Don, All American Aviation was a forerunner of U. S. Air before the major airline service began spreading across the country. He said the first pickup was made May 12, 1939, at Latrobe. The Stinson Reliant, manufactured by the Stinson Aircraft Co. of Northville, Mich., was used in the flights.

With a wing measurement of 41-feet, 10½ inches, it was considered the Cadillac of the air at that time, Don said. Normally, he added, the plane carried five passengers. However, there was just a pilot and a mechanic when it was used for mail pickup. The mechanic also dropped the mail, pulled up the bag from ground level and sorted the correspondence en route to the next pickup.

The main route ran from Pittsburgh to Philadelphia, according to Don, who has assembled probably the most complete aviation library in the Johnstown area. Spurs also went to West Virginia, Jamestown, N. Y., and toward State College, Lock Haven and Williamsport. "Those were the basic routes," he said.

From Johnstown, traveling east, according to the historian, the next pickup was Portage, then Duncansville, on to Mount Union, to Harrisburg and eventually Phildelphia.

It was in 1971 while attending an Antique Airplane Association fly-in at Blakesburg, Iowa, that a chance conversation ended a 10-year search and opened up an opportunity for Don to buy not only a Stinson Reliant, but one that acutally had been used in the mail pickup service.

After dickering on a price, he made two weekend trips to Indianapolis, Ind., and hauled the plane back home in a truck. "Over the years, I've done a considerable amount of work on it, but it's got a long way to go to fly yet,." he noted.

In about 1975, Don said after a couple of years of price negotiating he was able to buy "three pickup-truck loads" of surplus Stinson parts. They had been purchased by an operator at the Allegheny County Airport after All American Aviation shut down its mail pickup system in 1949.

Restoring aircraft is expensive, Don pointed out, which partially explains why his SR-10 still is grounded. Recently, however, U. S. Air has expressed interest in finishing the plane in return for promotional use of the antique. It would be displayed around the country this year during the 45th anniversary of the start of the pickup delivery system.

Since 1979, Don has been in possession of the remains of a 1928 SM1B Stinson Detroiter — a rare "bird" indeed. "If we ever get it flying, it will be the only one of its kind that will ever fly," the aviation enthusiast declared.

He said there are only three others. Two are in the Ford Museum in Dearborn, Mich., and the other, the "Greater Rockford," is being restored by Rock Valley College at Rockford, Ill.

Crew gets lost

The "Greater Rockford" has an interesting background. Equipped to fly the great circle route between Rockford and Stockholm, Sweden, the crew got lost in a snow storm and landed on the Greenland icecap in 1928. Forty years later, in September 1968, the "Greater Rockford" was airlifted from the icecap and brought back to the United States for restoration.

Don traced the ownership of the SM1B Detroiter he owns first to a Nashville, Tenn., man who bought it in 1928. Four years later it was purchased by Orin Welch, who operated an aircrft factory in South Bend, Ind.

The big monoplane with a 45-foot-plus wingspan was "retired" in 1936 and moved to Surber Mountain in the Pocono Mountains near Dallas, Pa., where Orin Welch had planned to clear a landing strip. However, World War II intervened. Orin went to serve his country and was lost flying "The Hump" over India — never to return.

In another conversation with a fellow antique airplane devotee in Blakesburg,

this time in 1977, Don learned about the Stinson Detroiter that had been in the Welch family history. Its last known existence was on a farm some 20 miles northeast of Wilkes-Barre.

Two years later, Earl Samuel, a Richland Township native who had moved to Dallas, Luzerne County, and knew about Don's interest in the old plane, located the remains in an orchard on a farm in the Surber Mountain area. He found the fuselage in two pieces plus a few other parts lying around in the grass. At Don's request, Earl arranged to purchase what was left of the old craft for $150.

Don has been able to obtain a set of factory plans for the ancient Detroiter, and twice has gone to Rockford to confer with those restoring the "Greater Rockford." Don is committed to seeing his Stinson SM-1 fly again.

Don also has a four-passenger Cessna Skyhawk that he flys. Virtually a new plane, it had been damaged in a crackup at the Ebensburg Airport. Don and Brian rebuilt it.

Gets a license

A mild heart attack in 1980 knocked Don out of flying for a couple of years. He made the most of the "grounding" to do something he always wanted — become a licensed airplane mechanic.

Back in the air since July 1982, he is looking forward to even more flying time now that he finally has been able

to get hanger space at the local airport so close to his home.

With all of his flying experiences, Don said it is the personal relationships with people sharing his love of aviation that he cherishes most.

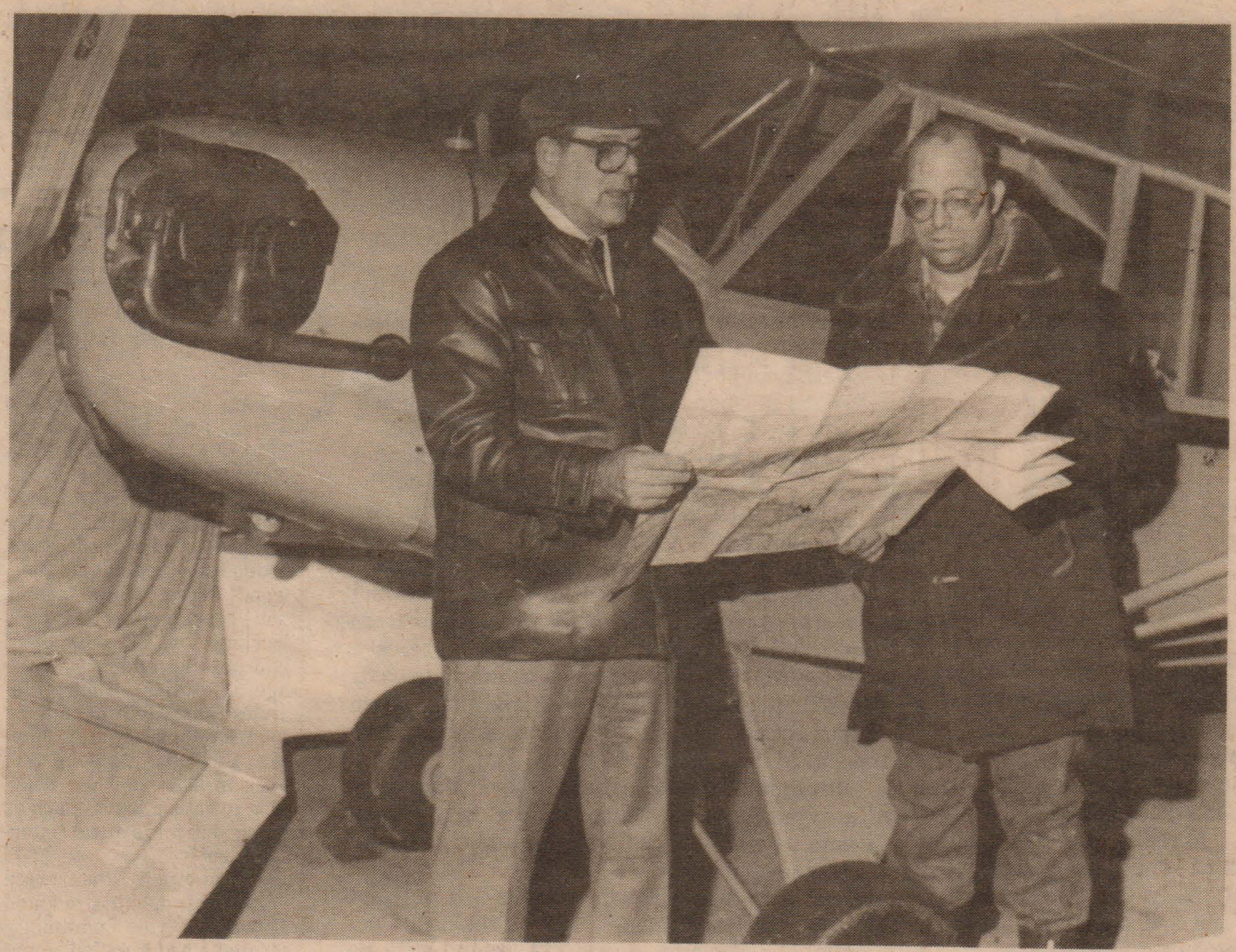
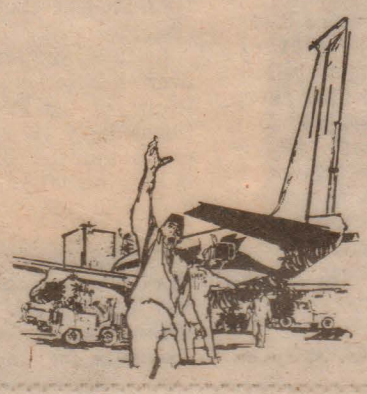


Photo by Dean Maxwell

Father, son combination

Don Fyock, left, and his son, Brian, both licensed pilots and licensed airplane mechanics, spend a lot of time together rebuilding planes. The craft behind them is a 1946 J-3 Piper Cub which they rebuilt and have been flying since 1976. Don is chairman of the board of directors of the Conemaugh Valley Mutual Insurance Co. The agency has been in the family for four generations.



Scrapbook suggestion

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#48

They have stayed put for a long, long time

By Lois J. Siehl

Suie and Mahlon Wingard, descendants of an old line Richland Township Mennonite family, have been residing in the same Richland Township farmhouse since they were born. When you consider that Mahlon is 90 years old and his sister is 87, their stay in one place borders on the remarkable.

Some three-quarters of a mile from Bethany United Methodist Church, the Wingard farm lies along Oakridge Drive where the terrain makes a sharp rise and then steadily climbs east to Salix, Elton and the Allegheny Mountain.

Visitors approaching the picturesque home at the end of a grass-covered lane find themselves being carried back to another age. Walking up the gently-sloped path to the house, the view is magnificent. The Laurel Ridge and the Conemaugh Gap spread out below in quiet panorama. Inside the house, curtainless windows, furniture in keeping with the "plain people" and the personalities of the occupants blend to stir feelings of nostalgia.

A large kitchen is kept comfortably warm by an old wood-burning cook stove. Mahlon still cuts and transports the wood himself from a stand of trees behind the house. A large easy chair by a window, reading material and a small television set leaves no doubt that it is Mahlon's corner of the kitchen. Elsewhere, an old rocking chair, a round oak table, a Mennonite wall calendar, windows bare of adornments and a Bible on a small table reflect unchanged lifestyles and values long established.

Asked why the farmhouse does not face the road and why it had been built back so far, Mahlon explained that a barn formerly had been between the house and the roadway. "And besides," he added, "that's where the spring was. You always put the house where the water is."

Hard work

Looking back on those early years on the farm, Suie, said, "We all worked hard. We had seven or eight cows all the time. That was considered a good herd. Tending them . . .raising feed . . . making butter . . . We had pigs and chickens, too. The barn would be packed with hay over the winter — just packed! Dad worked on the road, too, to pay off our taxes. And he would haul lime for the farmers from a Frankstown Road quarry."

Suie said the family picked up needed cash by traveling almost every week by wagon or sleigh to Johnstown to sell their truck-farm products.

"We sold butter, eggs, potatoes, pears, apples and cabbage," she recalled. "We buried the cabbage in the ground to keep for winter, and apples under hay in the barn. There would be 50 wagons lined up for market down in Johnstown on Market Street selling to the city folks."

Suie remembered that winters were longer then. "We would get the sleighs out in November and use them until March," she said. "We did a lot of shoveling."

Mahlon mentioned that the water pump outside would freeze. "We had an ice house behind the barn where the sun wouldn't hit it, and had ice long into the summer," he noted.

There were the good times as well — lots of sledriding on the nearby slopes; playing checkers and jacks; and making up their own games to help pass the long winter nights.

Both Mahlon and Suie paid attention to their school work. Suie's zest for learning became apparent in her converstion:

"I loved the spelling bees and the debates in school. Many times I would win. But, don't put that in the paper. It will seem like I'm bragging."

Education

Like their father before them, Suie and Mahlon attended Rachel Hill School. However, they completed their education at Geistown School after it was opened.

Lifelong members of Weaver Mennonite Church along Scalp Avenue, according to Suie there was never any decision as to whether the family would attend service. "Nothing was ever said," she stated. "No matter what the weather, we just got ready and went to church."

In 1928, Suie decided to read the Bible from beginning to end. She recorded the date of completion of her goal in the back of her Bible. Since then, she has added 41 additional dates of completion.

Mahlon worked 37 years at the United States Steel plant in Moxham and still worked on the farm. At U. S. Steel, he worked 10-hour shifts, six days a week at a beginning wage of 19 cents an hour.

Through the years, Suie made quilts, helped with the busy farm routines and later took care of her parents in their retirement years.

The parents were Levi J. Wingard and the former Susannah Baumgardner. Levi, who died in 1938, was the first born in a marriage between Jacob J. and Polly (Eash) Wingard.

Tracing the Wingard line back another generation, Jacob Wingard was the son of Christian and Fanny (Miller) Wingard. According to family records, Christian Wingard was born in 1787 in Alsace, Germany. He was 14 years old when he landed in this country in 1801 with his widowed mother and settled for a time on "Amish Hill" — now Westmont Borough.

Christian Wingard's father, Jakob, had come to Pennsylvania by himself in the late 1790s. He staked out a claim to a farm and returned to Europe for his wife and children. However, on the return voyage to America, he died and was buried at sea. Meanwhile, according to family lore, a cousin by the same name had taken possession of the land by fraud, leaving the Wingard children not only fatherless but homeless.

Suie's and Mahlon's great-grandfather, Jacob Wingard, who was born in 1834, acquired expansive land holdings in what is now the College Park Manor residential development near Richland junior and senior high schools.

Levi was born in 1860 to the union of Jacob Wingard and Polly Eash. A daughter, Annie, followed in 1862. Polly died the ensuing year at the age of 33. Jacob married a second time to the former Catherine Blough, who gave birth to these children: Louisa, Simon, Christy, Lucinda, Jennie, Hiram, Elias, Alice, Katie, John H. and Emma.

Levi, eldest of the Jacob J. Wingard clan, at age 28 decided to establish his own farm. He purchased 79 wooded, rocky acres of ground from Moses Miller — the farm now occupied by Mahlon and Suie. "Seemed we were cleaning this land forever!" Mahlon exclaimed. The farmhouse was built in 1889 by Abe Miller, and just in time for Levi's new bride, Susannah Baumgartner (original spelling).

The offspring

Ralph, the couple's first child, was born in 1890. Then came Lizzie in 1891, Mahlon in 1893, Suie in 1896, Harvey in 1899 and Algie in 1901.

Ralph also is living. He is staying at the Church of the Brethren Home in Paint Borough.

Susannah died in 1948.

One can't help feeling that in Suie and Mahlon Wingard, the rugged, independent spirit established by their parents nearly a century ago still abides.

Family portrait on 70th birthday

The late Levi J. Wingard wanted only a chicken dinner and a family portrait taken on the occasion of his 70th birthday anniversary. According to his daughter Suie, who shares the old Oakridge Drive homestead with her brother, Mahlon, her father got his wish on both counts. The photo was taken in 1930. The family (left to right) includes Suie Wingard, Levi and his wife, Susannah, and Lizzie (Wingard) Parker, all in the front, and Ralph, Mahlon, Harvey and Algie Wingard, in the rear.

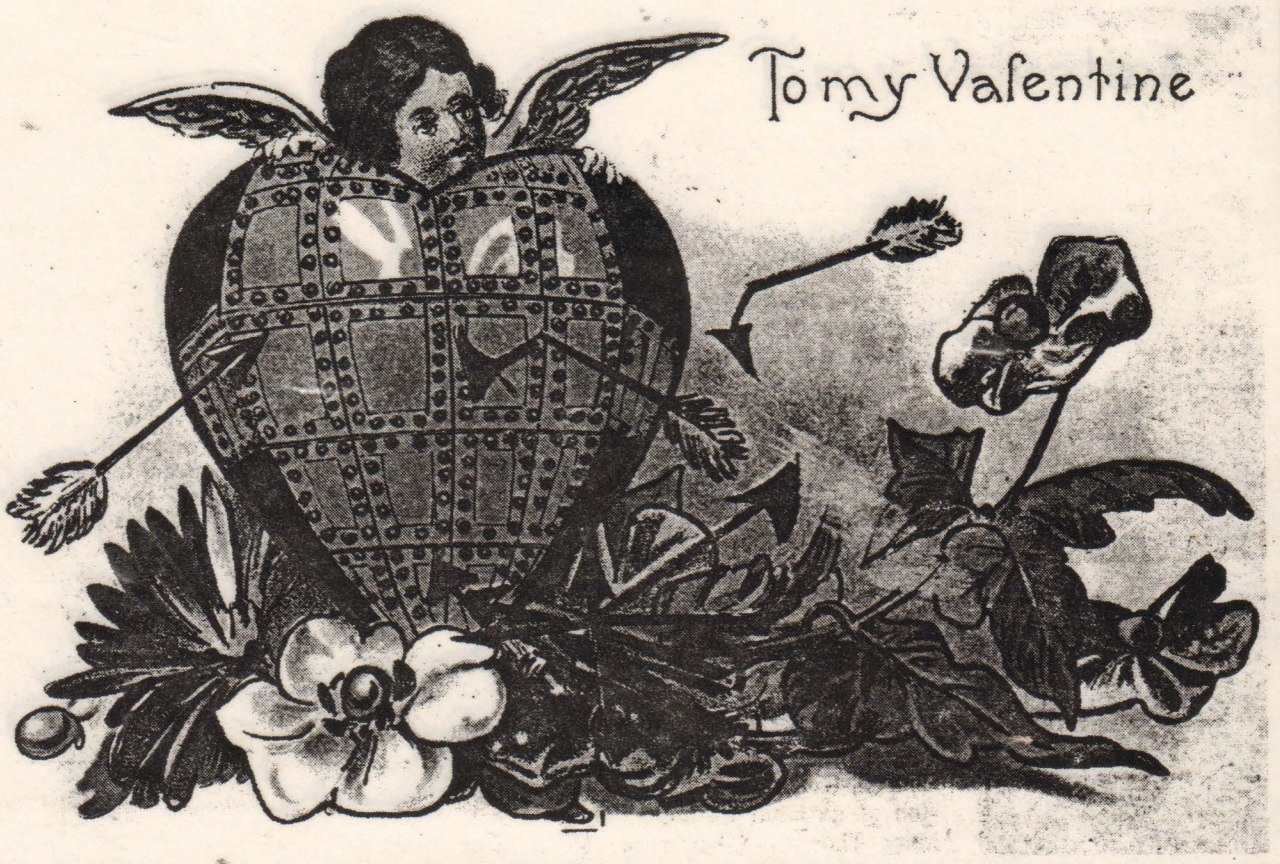
The Levi J Wingard family

Levi J. Wingard and his wife, the former Susannah Baumgardner, posed with their young family for this photo in the early 1900s. Suie Wingard is in the front. The others (left to right) are Mahlon, Susannah, Harvey (baby), Ralph, Levi and Lizzie.

#49

Postcards carried valentines in early 1900s

By James W. Siehl
and
Lois J. Siehl



Valentine's Day sentiments oft times were exchanged simply and openly in the form of penny postcards at the turn of the century.

Sample cards appearing in this Richland Township Sesquicentennial Scrapbook chapter, all addressed to George Duman, are the property of Timothy Duffy of 2212 Bedford St. They had been left in an attic in the old Duman homestead in Walsall before coming into Mr. Duffy's possession. Walsall, the former coal mining community, is situated along Eisenhower Boulevard.

The Valentine card with the pretty girl in curls was postmarked Jan. 20, 1908, which says something about the mail service in those days. People apparently believed in mailing early. Of course, there were no home deliveries then. Folks had to pick up their mail at their neighborhood post office. Obviously, important matters such as expressing one's affections could not go to the last minute. Allowing for snow storms . . . sickness and similar perils . . . it might be a week or more before the mail reached its destination.

Not flowery

Written in pen and ink, there is nothing flowery about the message in the aforementioned card. It gets to the point quickly:

"Many thanks for card. Come again."

The same holds true with the valentine showing Cupid seeking protection behind a heart-shaped shield. Signed just Nola, it states:

"Thanks for the postal. Call again."

The year 1908 was a good one for George Duman. He received no less than six valentines — all from different senders.

The attractive card featuring Cupid and the dove reads:

"George. "I received your valentine. Thank you ever so much. Sorry to tell you, but I can't see you Saturday night. I suppose you know why. Good-by. Hoping to hear from you soon. From Agnes."

Since 1908 also was a leap year, it is not surprising that Mr. Duman would be the target of some enterprising woman interested in the prospect of marriage. He received a post card dated June 1 of that year depicting a couple seated at table coyly gazing at each other. Inscribed is the following:

"Here it would not be right, you know, For me to fall upon my knees. They'll not hear if I whisper, though: Become my darling husband — please!"

On the back, the writer noted:

"Many thanks for card. Come again. Mary."

As an amateur photographer, the late Mr. Duman developed a reputation for doing nice work. The photo of the pretty young woman in the long dress is an example. It was made from a glass negative found in the attic along with the valentines.

The woman was Mr. Duman's half-sister, the former Liz (Nagle) Bixler of Walsall, who died about a year ago. She was the daughter of Matias and Ada (Duman) Nagle.

To grasp a flavor of romance in this period, Richland Township natives old enough to recall the courting graces point out that there weren't very many places for young people to go. Consequently, opportunities to become acquainted were few. Church services and related social events were likely gathering points. Many times, the young people would go to each other's homes after the church activities. And, of course, school life added another dimension.

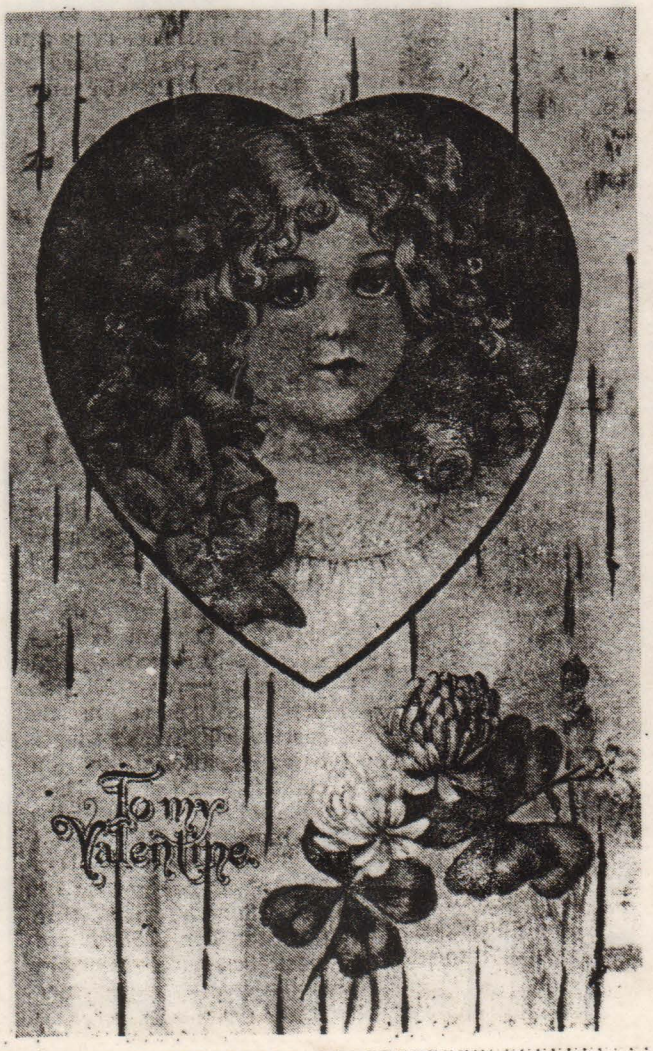
Since there was no public transportation, young people usually walked to wherever they wished to go — another reason why dating centered around entertainment in the home environment. Especially for the first few dates, couples did not pair off by themselves, but moved about in groups.

The impromptu sessions in the farmhouses featured popcorn parties, taffy pulls and vocalizing around a piano if the household was fortunate to have one.

Normally, there was not a lot of dating before serious intentions were established. Couples began going steady and soon after became engaged. Many times, it was a member of the family who would lay the groundwork for future matrimonial bliss by spreading the word of an eligible sister or brother who had become dating age.

Here it would not be right, you know,
For me to fall upon my knees;
They'll not hear if I whisper, though:
Become my darling husband—please!

Copyrighted 1908
By L. Grollman



Sesquicentennial Scrapbook

#50

The Wingards were instrumental in development of Richland Township

By James W. Siehl
and
Lois J. Siehl

Amish and Mennonite farmers bearing the name Wingard — also spelled Wenghart and Wingart — were instrumental in the development of Richland Township as a rural community. In the tradition of the prolific Blough (Blauch) and Hostetler (Hochstetler) clans, Wingards raised big families and assumed large land holdings during the township's early history.

In 1890, the Cambria County atlas listed the names of six families of Wingards with combined property totaling more than 400 acres of prime farmland. Much of that property since has become sites of modern educational, commercial and residential facilities.

Included were I. Wenghart, 100 acres in the Salix region; Peter Wingard, 180 acres, taking in the Greater Johnstown Area Vocational-Technical School property; Levi Wingard, 58 acres near the Richland Mall; and P. Wingart, L. Wingart and Jacob Wingart, all farmers in the College Park Manor area.

Forty-five years later, according to Richland Township's 1923 census, Wingards had more than doubled their combined 1890 acreage. By then, too, an agreement apparently had been reached on a common spelling of the family name. All of the listings used the Wingard spelling. Included were:

Levi J. Wingard, Oakridge Drive, 67 acres; William Wingard, Bedford Road (Elton Road), 26 acres (Richland Mall); Levi P. Wingard, Bedford Road (Elton Road), 89 acres; Cloyd Wingard, Bedford Road, residence.

Josiah Wingard, route between Bedford Road and Scalp Level Pike (area of new retirement home off Schoolhouse Road), 68 acres; Catharine (Blough) Wingard, original Jacob Wingard farm (Schoolhouse Road), 90 acres; George L. Wingard (Schoolhouse Road), 67 acres; Peter Wingard, fronting Bedford Road (Elton Road), including site of Metropolitan building, 104 acres; and Ralph Wingard and Jacob Wingard, both of Scalp Level Pike (Route 56).

Roots in Switzerland

It is believed the Wingard family roots go back to Bern Canton, Switzerland. A tiny village in the Wenger Mountains, it was the source of a religious migration by hundreds of Anabaptists (later known as Amish) to Alsace, France, in the 1700s.

Jakob Wingard is regarded as the common ancestor of the local Wingard descendants. A family man, he had traveled alone to the new country in the late 1790s. After staking out a claim to a farm, he went back to Europe for his wife and children. However, on the return voyage in 1801, Jakob died and was buried at sea. His family settled in Cambria County.

Christian Wingard (1787-1882), Jakob's son, was 14 years old when he landed in this country with his widowed mother. Christian married Veronica "Fannie" Miller (1791-1860), and started housekeeping on "Amish Hill," now Westmont Borough.

They raised a family of four sons and seven daughters and brought them up in the Amish tradition. Some time in the 1840s, Christian joined the pioneer movement west. He lived in Ohio a number of years before finally settling in LaGrange County, Indiana, where he died at the age of 95.

Jacob J. Wingard (1834-1916), youngest child of Christian and Fanny Wingard, became known in his early years as Jacob Jr. — strange since his father's name was not Jacob. Jacob disliked the junior appendage and began writing his name as Jacob J.

A long walk

He spent practically his entire life in the Johnstown area, taking only a few long trips. Once he went to Ohio to visit his brothers and sisters. On another occasion, he helped a drover take a herd of cattle from Stoystown to Philadelphia. Since the cattle could only be driven a few hours each day, it was a long trip. When the cattle had been delivered, Jacob J. walked back home.

He married Pollie Eash, who died in 1863 leaving him with a 2½-year-old son and a year-old daughter. Jacob then married Catharine Blough. Four sons and eight daughters were born to this union. Two of the daughters, however, died in infancy and a son in his teens.

Jacob was blind for six years and bedfast nearly three before his death. A Mennonite, his funeral was preached in the Weaver Mennonite meetinghouse (Scalp Avenue) by S. G. Shetler and D. S. Yoder from II Timothy 1:12 and Acts 13:36. He was buried in Weaver Cemetery. Among his descendants were six Mennonite ministers and a daughter who spent 20 years in city mission work.

Annie Wingard (1862-1925), daughter of Jacob and Pollie Wingard, became the second wife of Mennonite Preacher L. A. Blough. They had 10 children, three of whom died of diphtheria between 1887 and 1890. Annie died of cancer at Memorial Hospital.

Jacob Wingard II, brother of Christian Wingard, is sometimes recorded as having been born in 1802. However, since his father, Jakob, died on the voyage to America in 1801, he may have been born in that year. He grew up in Cambria County, where he married Maria Lehman. They raised a family of 11 children. Jacob belonged to the Amish Church. He died in 1880.

Polly (1831-1898), daughter of Jacob II and Maria Wengert (old spelling), lived all of her life in the local area. In 1851, she married Moses D. Eash. They had 12 children, eight of whom were still living when she died of heart disease in 1898. Her funeral was conducted by Amish ministers Moses Miller and Jonathan Hershberger and Mennonite ministers Jonas Blauch and S. G. Shetler in the Miller Amish meetinghouse.

John Wingard, a son of Jacob II and Maria Wingard, shared his Uncle Christian's yen to explore the opportunities in the West. He spent a major portion of his life in Missouri and Kansas before returning to Richland Township in his retiring years.

A 1906 gathering

This photo was taken in 1906 in front of the John Wingard homestead. Still in use as a residence, the old farmhouse is situated adjacent to the Peoples Natural Gas Co. property on the Elton Road opposite the Luther Road junction. John Wingard was born in 1836 in Cambria County, son of Amish parents, Jacob II and Maria (Lehman) Wingard. Because he elected to seek his fortune in the far West, John did not acquire major land holdings as did some of his cousins. The picture was taken after the family returned from the west. Members include: Front — Jacob Wingard, Mrs. Susan Wingard, John Wingard, Mrs. Levi Knavel, Ben Craig, Mrs. Joseph Wingard and George Wingard. Back — Mrs. Jacob Wingard, Mr. and Mrs. John Thomas, Mr. and Mrs. Ammon Wingard, Levi Knavel, Mrs. Ben Craig, Joseph Wingard and Mrs. George Wingard. The picture includes all of John and Susan Wingard's children who lived to an adult age except Abraham, whose pioneering spirit kept him on the move. Abraham resided in Montana, Kansas, Canada and Mexico. Photo is the property of Bertha (Yoder) Patrick of the Richland Towers.

Scrapbook suggestion

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Jacob J. Wingard's offspring

Members of this Mennonite family in this photo no longer are living. They are the offspring of Jacob J. Wingard, whose father, Christian, was 14 years old when he came to this country from France in 1801. From left to right, the group includes: Front — Emma Wingard, Katie Wingard, Jennie Wingard and Jennie Grabill. Back — Alice Wingard, John Wingard and Hyram Wingard. The photo is the property of Jessie (Johns) Wingard of Stadium Terrace, Windber.

Correction

The John Wingard family,featured in The Era Feb. 21, did not reside most of their lives in the West. A photo taken in 1906 shows the family in front of a farmhouse, which still is in use as a residence adjacent to the Peoples Natural Gas Co. property along the Elton Road. John Wingard farmed that area.

They came to Scalp Level to sketch nature's beauties

By James W. Siehl
and
Lois J. Siehl

Before coal mines stained its pure waters an ugly yellow, Paint Creek's deep scenic gorge dividing Richland and Paint townships was an irresistable lure to prominent western Pennsylvania painters.

They were drawn by the natural landscapes — the stately, virgin white pine and hemlock trees blending with dusty green mountain laurel and myriad rock formations.

Charles Linford (1846-1897), who resided the first 30 years of his life in Pittsburgh, is credited as the first artist to notice the opportunities for sketching nature in Scalp Level, then a remote mountain village.

He introduced a group of fellow palette-holders to the lush vistas of the Lower Paint Creek Valley, Yoder Falls and the pastoral countryside. Thereafter, each summer between 1878 and 1905 they came to sketch — 20 to 30 of them — traveling by train to Johnstown and then by horse and carriage to Scalp Level where they stayed in a summer boarding house and nearby homes.

Linford, a student of George Hetzel, was still a young painter when he was admitted to the "Gillespie Group," a collection of artists who met each day at noon at the J. J. Gillespie Art Gallery in Pittsburgh. Besides Hetzel and Linford, the group included Alfred S. Wall, Joseph R. Woodwell, David Gilmour Blythe and Jasper H. Lawman.

French influence

Linford was almost exclusively a landscape painter, whose style was influenced by the French Barbizon painters Rousseau and Diaz whom he admired. Hetzel and others among the congenial Pittsburgh artists in Scalp Level also painted in much the same way as their French comtemporaries at Barbizon.

Hetzel had moved to Pittsburgh with his family at age two. Encouraged by his parents to develop his natural artistic talent, he went abroad to study two years at the Dusseldorf Academy. Although, he painted portraits and still lifes throughout his career, by the late 1850s he was concentrating on landscapes in western Pennsylvania.

J. W. Beatty, appointed by Andrew Carnegie as first director of the Department of Fine Arts at Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh, enjoyed the summer-sketching trips to Scalp Level. Along with Woodwell, Beatty was instrumental in establishing the Carnegie International Exhibitions. His work showed a particular interest in nature and the out-of-doors. He particularly favored the horse.

Son of a Pittsburgh woodcarver, Woodwell was an important figure in Pittsburgh's artistic history. In 1859 at age 17, he took part in the first Pittsburgh Art Association exhibition. In the 1860s, he spent some time in Europe where he studied with the French landscape painters at Barbizon. By 1878, he was a recognized artist and was part of a group of painters working in Scalp Level, a summer retreat similar to the Barbizon art colony.

Toward the late 1880s, the dark moodiness of his Barbizon-influenced work tended to yield to a lighter, looser technique. In Scalp Level, he made sketches outdoors both in pencil and oil in which he experimented with composition, space and the effects of natural light. "Farm House at Scalp Level" is one of these. It depicts a house of the type occupied by the Scalp Level summer artists.

Alfred Bryan Wall (1861-1935) was a young child when he began accompanying his father and uncle, Pittsburgh artists Alfred S. Wall and William Coventry Wall, and their friends on sketching trips to Scalp Level. Working with those artists and guided by his father's criticisms, he had no further art training in preparing to participate in his first exhibition in 1879 at the National Academy of Design.

Although Alfred B. Wall painted some portraits, among them Andrew Carnegie, he continued the tradition of the Scalp Level painters making landscape his most frequent subject. His quiet, pastoral scenes invariably included sheep.

Alfred S. Wall, younger brother of William Coventry Wall, was born in Mount Pleasant, Westmoreland County, about 1825, shortly after his family had moved there from England. Following his brother to Pittsburgh, he took up painting. Like his older brother, William, Alfred was a self-taught artist. And, although he never had been abroad his method of painting was so akin in quality to that of the Barbizon men that he was deemed worthy of their company, according to one source.

Noted for his landscape work in which he was most prolific, Alfred S. Wall made yearly trips to Scalp Level with Woodwell, Hetzel and other Pittsburgh artists for material for his landscapes.

According to Martin B. Leisser, writing in the Pittsburgh Gazette Times of May 2, 1910, "Mr. Wall's opinions in matters of art, particularly in relation to tone and color, were always highly respected."

Born in 1810 in Oxford, England, William Coventry Wall came to this country in the early 1820s. In 1843, he began making picture frames and selling artists supplies at J. J. Gillespie's Variety Store in Pittsburgh, a section of which was turned into a gallery and became a gathering place for local artists for over 100 years.

Jasper Lawman, Albert F. King and King's close friend, Martin B. Leisser, were other prominent Pittsburgh painters whose landscapes reflect the freshness and life of some of the nature studies by Woodwell and Hetzel in Scalp Level.

Lawman's "Trout Stream Landscape" is characteristic of the quiet scenes of nature produced by the Barbizon-inspired Scalp Level group and exhibited in Pittsburgh, particularly at J. J. Gillespie Gallery.

Leisser (1846-1940) gained his initial training in art from older Pittsburgh artists, among them Hetzel. He was able to go abroad after the Civil War and studied at the Julian Academy in Paris and at the Academy in Munich. A close friend of Andrew Carnegie, he was influential in convincing Carnegie to include an art school in Carnegie Institute of Technology. Before Paint Creek and the Stony Creek became polluted, the area attracted large crowds, particularly during the period when the streetcar line from Johnstown to Windber was in operation.

Attractions

Attractions at Paint Creek Station included a store, hotel, railroad station and a dance pavilion. Another popular spot was Border Dam, about a mile and a half up the Stony Creek and the site of a number of dwellings and a favorite swimming place.

People could board a Johnstown Traction Co. streetcar in Windber and travel down the beautiful Paint gorge to Paint Creek Station. There, if they wished, they could switch to the B & O and go to Somerset. The streetcar line came to an end with a major flood in 1936.

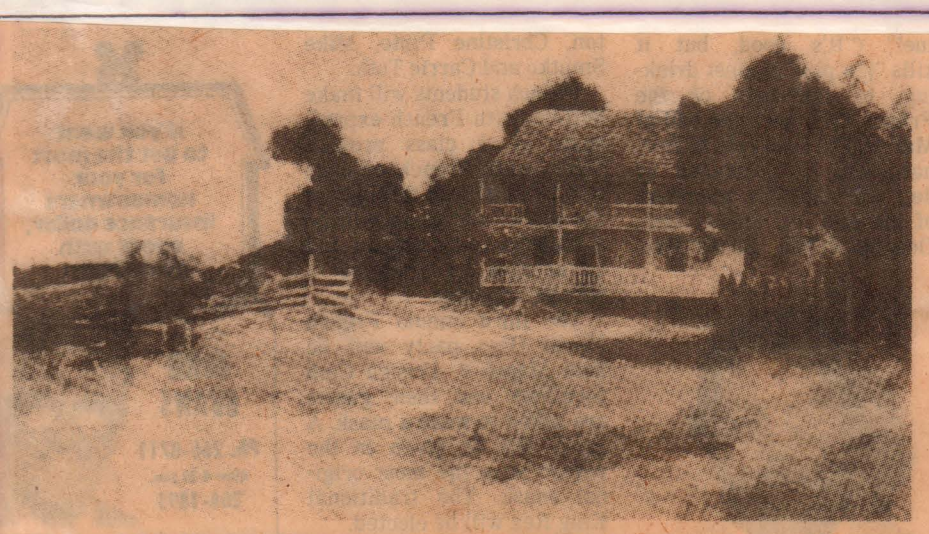
Sketching in Scalp Level

Background information on artists featured in this Sesquicentennial Scrapbook chapter was taken from a publication, "Southwestern Pennsylvania Painters," published by the Westmoreland County Museum of Art, Greensburg. This photo, taken in July 1887, includes a group of Pittsburgh artists sketching a landscape in Scalp Level. Left to right, they are Albert F. King, George Layng and George Hetzel.

Frivolous photo

In a moment of frivolity, these Pittsburgh artists got their heads together for a photo in July 1887 in Scalp Level. They had gone to the scenic Paint Creek Valley each summer to gather landscape material. Left to right, the group includes: Front — Albert F. King, George Layng and George Hetzel. Back — H. S. Stevenson and Joseph R. Woodwell.

Creek Valley each summer to gather landscape material. Left to right, the group includes: Front — Albert F. King, George Layng and George Hetzel. Back — H. S. Stevenson and Joseph R. Woodwell.



A Woodwell painting

Entitled, "Farmhouse at Scalp Level," this oil-on-canvass was painted by Joseph Ryan Woodwell, one of the Pittsburgh artists who was captivated by the charm of Paint Creek back at the turn of the century. Some of the painters may well have boarded at the house during their stay.

seph Ryan Woodwell, one of the Pittsburgh artists who was captivated by turn of the century. Some of the painters may well have boarded at the house during their stay.

#52

2 versions exist of how Scalp Level got its name

Historic falls at Scalp Level

Date and the occasion for this photo have been lost over the years, but time has not dimmed the beauty of the historic falls at Scalp Level. The falls bring to a climax Paint Creek's descent into the Stony Creek River, near where Little Paint Creek also joins the river to wend its way toward Johnstown. In former times, prominent artists from Pittsburgh and other sections of Pennsylvania came each summer to sketch the falls and scenic Paint Creek Valley. The photo is the property of Dorothy Caldwell of Lydia Avenue.

By James W. Siehl
and
Lois J. Siehl

With Little Paint Creek on Richland Township's southern border both a dividing line between Cambria and Somerset counties and neighboring Paint Township, it was natural that inhabitants in the developing years had much in common. It was not unusual for properties to extend on both sides of the Paint.

The countryside around Scalp Level, the hub of activity in the region, was still wilderness in 1820 when Jacob Ashe Jr. built a saw mill along Little Paint Creek, getting the power to run his mill from the ample water flowing down the picturesque mountain tributary.

Jacob Ashe Jr. was born April 26, 1797, in Somerset County. He received a common school education and became skilled in designing, building and maintaining mills and their machinery (millwright). His father, Bishop Jacob Ashe, according to tradition, was the first Amish bishop in Somerset County.

Ancestory of the Ashe (Eash) clan has been traced to the Canton of Bern in Switzerland, from where the forefathers of other early settlers of Richland Township migrated to this country. Among them were the Hochstetler (Hostetler), Kauffman, Lehman, Muller (Miller) and Joder (Yoder) families.

According to Eash family records, after leaving Switzerland Jacob Ashe boarded a ship in Rotterdam in the Netherlands and sailed to this country. He arrived in Philadelphia on the Duke of Witenburg Oct. 16, 1751, and settled in Dauphin County.

His son, Jacob Eash Jr., married Susanna Miller of Berks County. They came to this area in about 1793. Thirteen children were born to their union. By 1808, Jacob Eash Jr. had acquired 193 acres of land in Somerset County. Two years later, he and Michael Miller bought another parcel, this one consisting of 328 acres, across Paint Creek in what is now Richland Township. Jacob later purchased Miller's interest in the tract.

On April 10, 1848, two years before his death, Jacob Eash sold a farm and 170 acres of land to his daughter and son-in-law, Elizabeth and Peter Hostetler, for $3,000. The land continued to be farmed for generations by their descendants.

Veil letter

A letter written by John H. Veil published May 24, 1932, in the Johnstown Tribune offers one version of how Scalp Level got its name.

According to the letter, Jacob Eash Jr. had been residing in a small log house on the south end of the Josiah Espy property on what later became known as the Andrew Kunkle farm.

For convenience sake, Mr. Eash decided to have a piece of land cleared close to his mill. He invited some of the settlers in the vicinity to a clearing bee, or more commonly called a frolic. The particular piece of ground is east of Main Street in Scalp Level.

"While the men were at work chopping down, cutting up, rolling on heaps to burn, others were cleaning and cutting the underbrush, when Mr. Eash came along with a jug — just what kind of whisky I can't say," Mr. Veil wrote. "But the price I do know as 'a fip and a bit,' or in other words 6¼ cents per quart, silver. When Mr. Eash came to the men engaged in clearing the underbrush, he made this remark: 'Boys, scalp them level,' meaning to cut them close to the ground. The place had a name then and there — the name of Scalp Level had its birth."

After the land had been cleared, Mr. Eash had his log cabin on the Espy tract torn down and dragged to the new site beside the banks of Little Paint Creek. It was reassembled as his home — one room on the first floor, one room upstairs, but no attic. A kitchen on the north end included a bake oven and fireplace.

In the spring of 1838, Henry Veil, father of John H. Veil, bought from Jacob Eash the log cabin and cleared land. The property was surveyed by Jacob Levergood. An article of agreement between Jacob Eash and Henry Veil was written by Abraham Morrison and witnessed by Conrad Seese. The deed was written by Justice William Slick, who resided in what now is Geistown Borough, and signed by Jacob Eash Jr. and his wife, Madeline (his wife's name by mark) and acknowledged by Justice Slick.

At the time Mr. Veil's letter was published, there still were a few living children of the early settlers. Mostly past 80 years old, they included Sarah Statler, Peggy Barnes, Peter Lint, Daniel Hoffman, Mrs. A. D. Weaver, Catherine Weaver and Gillian Seese.

Mr. Veil noted that where Little Paint Creek and the county line separated Paint and Richland townships, "the people living on both sides run much alike. Possibly the Seese family were the most numerous, with the Berkeys, Hoffmans, Lehmans, Horners, Shaffers, Millers, Murphys and Ripple families a close second."

"There was one peculiar feature I could never understand," Mr. Veil wrote. "That was their politics. Paint Township was stalwart Republican to the core, while on the north side of the county line and Little Paint Creek they were strong on the Democrat side, until in later years Richland became just as strong Republican as her neighbor, Paint Township."

Tobias (Eash) Ashe, oldest child of Jacob Eash Jr. and Mattie Lehman, was born in Scalp Level Dec. 5, 1825. He also was a millwright like his father and lived to old age. Eleven children were born to his first marriage to Hannah Meyers, who died at the age of 40. His second marriage to Rebecca Jane Hess, a native of Schellsburg, Bedford County, produced nine offspring. Tobias died Feb. 22, 1909, at 83. Rebecca died the same year. She was 68.

Other version

"The Eash Family Record and History," published in 1934, includes a letter written by Tobias Ashe in which he has detailed a more violent version of the naming of Scalp Level.

According to his account, his father had begun clearing space for grist-mill at the junction of Little Paint Creek, Paint Creek and the Stony Creek in May of 1831. He then entered into hard negotiations with millwrights from Harmons Bottom, Bedford County, and the mill was put into motion.

"I think that old water wheel propelled the first pair of burrs in Cambria County, and it is now my privilege to say that I manufactured a good many sacks of grain into flour on those burrs," Tobias wrote.

Providing a flavor of the times, the narrative tells about religious services being held from house to house by the Dunkards and the Amish.

"What few of the Amish residing east of the Stony Creek would go to the Amish settlement in Somerset County. And, as my parents were of that persuasion, they would go to preaching at the Amish settlement. This was about nine and sometimes 10 miles, but they were wide awake on this subject. As soon as the preaching was over, the seats would be filled with bread, butter, apple butter, pickles and very often a good bean soup. This to a small boy was the best part of the program after walking eight or 10 miles."

The nearest schoolhouse stood on a farm of Killian Hoffman, later the Emanuel Weaver farm. Since it was more than 2½ miles from his home, Tobias stated he only went to school "on odd days and when the weather was good."

"The only public road through there at that time," the letter continued, "was called the Shade Furnace Road. This road led from Johnstown to Shade Furnace, 14 miles, and Scalp Level being midway between, was a good place to stop and water and feed their stock. Those Shade fellows would always take refreshments themselves (with them). And, if we were out of buttermilk they filed no objections to taking a little tamarack, or bisley reclarclyson, as others called it."

Strangers could always find lodging with the Ashes, "and feeding and drinking could be obtained at our house at most any time."The colorful account goes on:

". . . There being a good demand for firewater, father conceived the idea that a distillery would pay, and he then erected a pair of distillers on a spring one mile west of Scelp Level on a farm of the long ago dead John Replogle, father of Jacob Replogle still living at or near Johnstown.

"Well a distillery, then as now was a curse to father and to nearly all who came in contact with it, especially when all connected with it drank from the worm that dies not.

"John Phenecy was hired to operate the concern, and he was disposed to drink to excess. He was also of a quarrelsome nature and of very stout build. And, in 1832, there was another man who came from Harmons Bottom, Bedford County, by the name of Charles Ellenberger. And, he, too, was somewhat fond of the same juice and also of fighting nature when the moon was dark. Well, these two men came together one day in earnest, and Ellenberger took quite a nip out of Phenecy's lip. And when it was over, Ellenberger got up and christened the place 'Scalp level,' as he had taken Phenecy's scalp. He (Ellengerger) claimed that there was the same kind of a place where he came from in Bedford County, and they called it Scalp Level. So ever after that it was called Scalp Level."

#53 March 13/1984

Her roots go deep into Richland's past

By James W. Siehl

Ninety-three-year-old Grace (Miller) Constable was nine years old when she moved from a Richland Township dairy farm and took up residence along the cobblestone streets of Dale Borough.

Despite arthritic knees which makes it difficult for her to walk, she lives by herself in the same wood frame house just two doors down from the firehall at 802 Bedford St.

Grace's roots dig deep into Richland's 150-year-old past.

Her maternal grandfather was Jeremiah "Jerry" Walter, who after his marriage to the former Sarah Brubaker, resided almost all of his married life on a farm along Walter Road, where he started a dairy business.

The Walter farmhouse stood near the junction of what is now Nees and Walters avenues. Until recent years the old Walter barn was intact and cattle grazed where the old homestead stood before yielding to modern living. Diagonally across the road, the National Guard Armory is on the former Jerry Walter farm.

Born Aug. 14, 1839, Jerry Walter was the son of John and Mary (Shaffer) Walter. Tracing the lineage back another generation, John Walter (1807-1843) was born in Jenner Township, Somerset County. His father, Frederick Walter (1767-1853) emigrated from Germany as a child. He married Barbara Elizabeth Barndt. True to the times, the Frederick Walters raised a large family. Sixteen children were born to their union.

Related to Wingards

Grace Constable — the nonagenarian — is related to the Wingards, a prominent early Richland clan who farmed huge tracts of the township. Her paternal grandparents were Jacob and Eva (Wingard) Miller. Jacob Miller was a grandson of Moses B . Miller, an Amish bishop.

Grace's parents were Levi Jacob Miller and the former Mary Emma Walter. According to Grace, when she was a year old her folks moved into a little four-room house at the rear of her "Grandpap" Walter's much larger farmhouse. "It was a big farm," she recalled, "and Mother and Daddy did all of the milking. They really ran the farm. They got up early in the morning. Milked morning and night.

Behind the main house, according to Grace, was a spring "with very good, clear water." The water was piped into and through the basement to service a springhouse where the milk was kept fresh until delivered or sold at the farm.

Grace estimated the number of cows at between 20 and 30. She still remembers her uncle, David Walter, rising early to drive a horse-drawn milk wagon to Johnstown. "He had customers all over the place," she said. The milk was transported in large cans, and "he just dished it out" along the way.

Born in 1891, Grace was the third of four children. Grace, her sister Edith and brother Walter resided on the farm. Later, when the family moved to Dale, brother Ted came along.

"We went to the old Meyers School (along Solomon Run Road). I went there for just one year. I didn't go to school until I was seven. I was the baby then, and they sort of kept me at home. Mother was very strong on keeping her babies babies."

Grace remembered walking from her house through the woods to a small Evangelical church from which the Bethany United Methodist Church along Leventry Road evolved. "It reminded me of a barn of some kind. There was a second floor, and that's where we had church."

The Miller clan

Levi Miller, who lived to be 98 years old, was just a tot when this photo was taken with him sitting on his father's lap. Levi Miller was the father of Grace Constable, who is 93 years old and principal subject of this week's Richland Township sesquicentennial feature. Grace's paternal grandparents (above) are Jacob and Eva (Wingard) Miller. The other children are Lavina and Harry Miller.

Levi Jacob Miller

Mary Emma (Walter) Miller and Ted Miller

. . . Grace Constable's parents and brother

It was dairy farm

This is how the Jerry Walter farm at Nees and Walters avenues looked when it was a Richland Township dairy farm years ago. Standing along the barbed wire fence is Levi Jacob Miller (left) and Dr. J. B. Keiper, a physician who resided across the road. Levi Miller married one of Jerry Walter's daughters (Mary Emma) and took up housekeeping in a small house behind the Walter homestead and helped operate the dairy business.

Her maternal grandparents, the Jerry Walters, didn't go to the Evangelical Church. They went to the Methodist Church in Johnstown. "Grandpap was very strong to come to the church (Franklin Street) here," said Grace, speaking from a comfortable chair, convenient to a telephone and a stack of books and periodicals in a corner of her living room.

Commenting on what Dale Borough was like when she moved there 84 years ago, Grace said, "It was pretty nice. Most of the houses you see now were here. The old streetcars came out then. We had a horse and a cow, and a barn in the backyard below the house."

Walked a lot

Although the family had a horse and buggy, Grace said they walked a lot — the thought bringing back memories of frequent hikes to the Walter farm.

Levi Miller (Grace's father) went to work for the John Thomas furniture store. Resuming her formal education in the Dale School System, Grace said at that time there was only a two-year program in the high school. She completed 10th grade, and then started what was to be her final two terms at Johnstown High School. That was before construction of the Somerset Street building when the Joseph Johns Junior High School, now the site of Joseph Johns Towers, served as the high school.

Grace never did graduate. "I don't know whether they needed teachers or not, but they asked me to come up there to teach," said Grace, referring to her opportunity to take a fourth-grade class in the Dale district.

After completing the term, Grace said she gave the principal, H. E. Nycum, an ultimatum, "Either give me first or second grade or I'm finished." Mr. Nycum granted her wish. He assigned her a mixed first and second grade class.

Grace remained in the Dale system for five years until transferring to the Southmont School System, where she became "a necessary fixture" to quote a daughter, Jane Orr, who was home for a visit from New Jersey. The Southmont School then occupied the building now used as a firehall and municipal building.

Grace went on to teach 41 years in Southmont. She didn't retire until she was 70 — 23 years ago.

Her two daughters, Jane and Lois (Crum), and son, J. Richard, came under her tutelage.

"I taught them all," she said. "And, my son says when anyone needed a paddling he got it. It wasn't that bad," she added with a laugh.

Jeremiah Walter

. . . Grace Constable's maternal grandparents

Sarah (Brubaker) Walter

"I just loved it (teaching). I really did. And the children were wonderful. And the parents were wonderful. They cooperated in every way. They made things so pleasant."

Asked about her teaching accredition, Grace said it was all done the hard way. "I took courses and courses."

Over many years (the number she couldn't recall), the instruction included extension courses in both Johnstown High School buildings — many scheduled after she had put in a day of teaching. She also went to summer school at Grove City College, eventually acquiring a standard, permanent teaching certificate.

When the subject of wages came up, Grace laughed again and said:

"I started in Dale at $42.50 (a month), and I was up there five years. At the end of that time I was making $62.50. Then when I went to Southmont I started at $125. They didn't add (raise salaries) like they do today — a thousand dollars a year. They added $5."

Although her knees pain her and she doesn't walk without a walker or cane, Grace considers her health good.

"I sit here and read," she said. "I read an awful lot."

Like what? she was asked.

"Junk. That's what I call it. For all of those years that I took courses and had to read all of this heavy stuff, well I was just worn out with it. Now, it's just something I enjoy. I have traveled all over the world. The books describe all of those far away places."

#34 March 20/1984

Weavers made their marks in Richland

By James W. Siehl
and
Lois J. Siehl

Descendants of Swiss emigrants, Weavers were among the earliest land owners in Richland Township. Over a long period of time, they developed a reputation as hard-working farmers and trustworthy folk following the tenets of their Amish Mennonite faith.

Before 1800, Weavers were included on the rolls of Weaver Mennonite Church. The fact that Weaver Mennonite Church, oldest church in the township, bears the family name points up the early status of the clan.

An 1890 map of Richland Township pinpoints eight Weaver homesteads. They included:

— J. Weaver, a 100-acre tract near Hoffman School along Berwick Road, which probably was the Jonas Weaver farm bought in 1838.

— Levi Weaver, owner of a 106-acre property along the Elton Road east of what now is the Richland Mall. Possession of the farm followed family ties, with Levi getting it from his father, Hiram T. Weaver, and he from his father, Tobias Weaver.

— Henry Weaver, owner of unlisted acreage along the Scalp Level Pike (Route 56) in area of Richland Bowl.

— Abraham C. Weaver, 140 acres between what now is Eisenhower Boulevard and Mine 37. Property willed to him from his father, Christian C. Weaver. Known first as the Mountain Orchard farm; later the Hamilton sheep farm.

— Daniel W. Weaver, large, unspecified farmland between Scalp Level and Mine 37. Uriah Weaver later developed an orchard on the property. Orchard exists today.

— Tobias Weaver, tract along Mine 37 Road.

— And Alexander Weaver, Elton Road area.

Researching courthouse records, obituaries, newspaper articles and the family Bible of Henry C. Weaver, Patricia M. Shaffer of 606 Shady Lane, Windber, has compiled an impressive history of the Weaver family's contribution to Richland Township's 150-year growth.

Christian A. Weaver was born June 6, 1813, near Davidsville. His father, Abraham, had come to this section with his father, Jacob Weaver. Amish-Mennonite farmers, they purchased fertile land in both Somerset and Cambria counties. Although Abraham Weaver's homestead was on the Somerset County side of Little Paint Creek, which separates the two counties, a considerable portion of his land was on the other side of the river in Richland Township.

On June 8, 1840, Christian A. Weaver bought a piece of land from his father along the Stony Creek about 1½ mile below the mouth of Paint Creek. The property had been part of a tract called Spring Grove which was sold April 6, 1833, to Abraham Weaver (Weaber) and Jacob Wingard. At that time, the land was in Conemaugh Township, formerly Brothersvalley Township, Bedford County.

Christian A. Weaver went on to become a prominent farmer in Richland Township. Supplementing their income, Christian and his two sons, Henry C. and Abraham C. Weaver, hauled pig iron from near Shade Furnace to Johnstown for use in the old Cambria Steel Company, a forerunner of the Bethlehem operation here.

They also hauled produce to Stoystown — then the principal marketing place. In 1864, records show they took part in the last county fair to be held in Kernville (Johnstown).

It was noted without further explanation that Christian A. Weaver was one of three men who in 1872 purchased the first three buggies in the United States. Upon his death in 1877, Christian Weaver provided in his will that his sons take over his vast holdings of Richland Township property.

Henry C. Weaver, who was born Jan. 24, 1850, in Richland, was the eldest son of Christian A. Weaver and Christian's second wife, Susan Keim.

Henry C. Weaver married Mary Miller, daughter of Bishop Moses B. Miller, who had moved here from the Springs area of Somerset County. Son of Bishop Benedict Miller, a well-known Amish minister, Bishop Moses B. Miller served the Weaver Mennonite Church and was regarded as a pioneer minister in the area.

Following provisions in his father's will, Henry C. Weaver purchased the property designated to him. The land later was known as the Thomas farm in Richland Township, and also included a woodland section formerly owned by Daniel Weaver.

Dies at 32

Henry C. Weaver was only 32 when he died in 1882 as a result of a fall and exposure while hauling ice from Frogtown.

Three children were born to the union of Henry C. and Mary (Miller) Weaver. Their daughter, Ellen, born Feb. 12, 1872, married Robert M. Luther on Christmas Day, 1892. The Rev. Jonas Blough, Bishop of the Weaver Mennonite Church, performed the ceremony. The Luther family set up housekeeping along what now is Luther Road near the current site of Riverside Market.

A second daughter, Susanah, was born to the couple March 4, 1875. Susanah married Ralph L. Veil, son of John H. and Mary (Buchannan) Veil of Scalp Level. Bishop Blough also officiated at that ceremony held July 16, 1895. The couple went to reside in Scalp Level.

Norman H. Weaver, youngest and only son of Henry C. Weaver, was born Feb. 11, 1878. He married Matilda Holsinger, daughter of David R. and Margaret Carrol Holsinger. She was a direct descendant of Alexander Mack, founder of the Church of the Brethren in the United States.

Some Weaver family members

Allegra Shaffer, daughter of the late Norman H. and Matilda (Holsinger) Weaver, has provided the photos in this week's Richland Township Sesquicentennial Scrapbook feature. Her father appears in both pictures. In the above photo, he is in the back row with his sisters, Susan (Weaver) Veil (left) and Ella (Weaver) Luther. The children were born during Mary (Miller) Weaver's first marriage to Henry C. Weaver. Mary, her second husband, Daniel H. Yoder, and John Calvin Eash, foster child of the couple, are in front. Mrs. Shaffer's parents (Norman and Matilda) are pictured in the other photo accompanying this story. Mrs. Shaffer's mother was the daughter of David R. and Margaret Carrol Holsinger.

Norman H. Weaver and his family resided along Main Street in Scalp Level, Richland Township. Norman went on to distinguish himself as a leader in the development of the Scalp Level Church of the Brethren.

Upon the death of Henry C. Weaver, the property he had inherited from his father was sold by the administrator of his estate, Bishop Moses B. Miller, to Henry Eash on Dec. 15, 1882. That ground consisted of an "undivided half of a tract of woodland situated on the water of Little Paint Creek in Richland Township, then by land of Joseph Yoder and Joseph Bomgardner, thence by the stones in the creek."

Other land holdings of Henry C. Weaver were sold to David J. Shaffer of Paint Township. Situated in Richland Township, the tract was "bounded by Henry Kraft and William Slick properties, thence along a township road and the land of Stephen Lehman, the Morrison stake and George Orris' property line."

Abraham C. Weaver, born Oct. 2, 1851, was the youngest son of Christian and Susan (Keim) Weaver. He married Mary Ann Stutzman from the Cramer area.

In his later years, Abraham Weaver recalled his limited schooling, which was all of three years at the Weaver School in Richland Township. He started at the age of 7 — the first year the school was built. His total education consisted of only eight months of classwork since school terms at that time were only two and three months' duration.

His lack of education did not prevent him from establishing one of the largest farms in Cambria County, and becoming one of its most prominent citizens.

Abraham purchased the homestead and farm on which he was born (later known widely as the Hamilton Place). At its peak operation, it was one of the largest fruit farms in the country. Apples and cherries were the principal crops.

Christian A. weaver, pioneer farmer, and his two wives, the former Lydia Miller and Susan Keim, are buried in the Weaver graveyard section of the Richland Cemetery behind the Weaver Mennonite Church.

Also buried with them are remains of Christian C. Weaver's sons, Henry C. Weaver and his wife, Mary Miller, and Abraham C. Weaver and his wife, Mary Ann Stutzman.

At the time of Mary (Miller) Weaver-Yoder's death Oct. 14, 1933, she was the oldest member of Weaver Mennonite Church. She was 86.

She was born Jan. 24, 1848, in Paint Creek. Her pioneer minister father, Bishop Moses B. Miller, and mother, Susannah Hershberger, had resided in Grantsville, Md., before coming to this area in the 1860s. Bishop Miller died in 1901.

After the accidental death of her husband, Mary remarried. She became the wife of Daniel H. Yoder, who died in 1928. Mary also was preceded in death by a foster child, John Calvin Eash, who died in 1908 at the age of 18 of typhoid fever.

"A. C." Weaver also was known for his horses. Most of the time, he kept a stable of 30, and often went on trips of 500 miles or more by horse and buggy.

Toll road

He played a major role in the construction of a toll road to Scalp Level from Johnstown, serving as highway supervisor for six years. Soon after the highway was completed, a boardwalk from Horner Street to Dale Borough was constructed by public subscription. Since the boardwalk crossed the toll road, Abraham Weaver was instrumental in its design so that it would not interfere with the paid road.

A. C. Weaver served as a school director in Richland Township for 32 years. At the age of 91, he was hit by a car while crossing Scalp Avenue after attending services at Weaver Mennonite Church. He died June 3, 1943.

his funeral service that the main auditorium of the small church had to be reserved for close relatives. An amplifying system was installed for the benefit of those seated in the church basement to hear the eulogy. He had been a member of the church for 73 years.

#55 March 27/1984

When Barbara Noon died, she was survived by 220 descendants

By James W. Siehl
and
Lois J. Siehl

When Barbara (Varner) Noon died in 1935 at the age of 103, the daughter of a pioneer Richland Township family, she was believed to have been the oldest woman in Pennsylvania. At the time of her death, she was survived by 220 descendants.

Mrs. Noon was born in 1832, a year before Richland was incorporated as a township. Her father, Peter Varner, held one of the original land grants in Richland. It included some 300 acres on the east side of Fulmer Road, which connects Solomon Run and Frankstown roads.

Eva (Singer) McFeaters of 215 Walters Ave., a great-great-great granddaughter of Barbara Noon, was only six months old when she helped make possible a rare six-generation photo featuring the then nonagenarian.

Referring to Barbara Noon's 220 descendants 49 years ago, Mrs. McFeaters declared, "I just realized that number was living descendants. My goodness, how many of us are there now?"

The section of the township in which Barbara Noon was reared was known as Myers Hollow. The old Myers one-room school house was situated at the bottom of the hollow.

Old maps show numerous properties owned by Noons along the Richland-Conemaugh Township line in the vicinity.

"My mother (Thelma Erb Singer)," said Mrs. McFeaters, "used to tell me that Grandma (Barbara Noon) told me about seeing Indians come to her father's place to trade. But, I'll be darned if I can remember it, and I was 10 when she died."

Good health

Barbara Noon's health had been remarkably good. At an age past 100, she still was sewing and reading her Bible without the aid of eyeglasses. Sewing quilts was a favorite pastime.

Interviewed on her 100th birthday anniversary, she said there was no certain age to which she aspired. She said she had lived a useful life and had "placed her house in order for God's call."

A well-worn Bible, her constant companion, had been read from cover to cover many times. On the subject of longevity, her formula called for a lot of hard work, faith in God and conscientious living.

Providing an insight as to the thinking of some women in that period, voting by women and prohibition were two matters upon which Mrs. Noon expressed firm convictions.

On women exercising their franchise at the polls, she told of a man's efforts to influence her to vote for a particular candidate. "I told him that I think a woman's place is in the kitchen and the garden, and that the men should be the ones to vote," she was quoted as saying.

5 generations

Thelma (Erb) Singer, a resident at the Arbutus Retirement Center, was 6 years old in 1910 when this five-generation picture was taken on the Hershberger farm at the east end of Walters Avenue in Richland Township. Fifteen years later, she was participating in a six-generation photo appearing elsewhere on this page. In the above photo, Thelma stands between her great-grandmother, Rebecca (Noon) Walker, 60, (left), and great-great-grandmother, Barbara (Varner) Noon, 79. Completing the cycle are Thelma's grandmother, Emma (Walker) Erb, 39, (left) and Thelma's mother, Elsie Rosella Erb, 22. Mrs. Singer will observe her 80th birthday anniversary Sept. 21.

As for the consumption of alcoholic beverages, she said the use of liquor had been much abused and that prohibition was a boon for that reason. Mrs. Noon was not totally opposed to the use of alcohol. She recalled in her paternal home when the children were given hot whisky to help break up a cold. In her younger days, according to the 1932 interview, whisky was sold as cheaply as 10 cents a quart.

After her marriage to Isaac Noon April 30, 1850, the couple went to reside on a 25-acre farm — the gift of Mrs. Noon's father — in Richland Township. Her husband, a well-known farmer and carpenter, died in 1897. He was 68.

Over a 30-year period, beginning Aug. 17, 1850, when their first child, Rebecca, was born, to when their last offspring, Frederick Leroy, came into the world on June 29, 1880, 12 children were born to their union. All but one lived to maturity.

At age 19 in 1869, Rebecca became the wife of Philip Walker after the young man had served as a Union soldier in the Civil War. Mr. Walker later worked as a heater in the old Cambria Iron Works in Johnstown.

Other children of Barbara and Isaac Noon included:

Uriah, who married Rusilda Gates in 1872; Sarah Jane, wife of Aaron Berkey; Stephen, who married Margaret Custer in 1890; Isaiah, who married Emma Christ in 1895; Harriet, wife of Simon Shaffer; Emma, who married S. E. Long in 1886.

Melvina, who married S. E. Follmar in 1887; Joseph Franklin, who died 10 days after his birth; Etta Drusilla, who married Henry L. Specht in 1906; and Cyrus Austin, who married Mina Miller. Frederick Leroy married Gertrude Himes in 1901.

Both Stephen and Harriet (Noon) Shaffer followed in their mother's footsteps, living extended lives. Stephen was 102 when he died; his sister, 98. Five other members of their immediate family were in their 80s when they died.

The Noon clan traces its ancestry to John and Mary (Ream) Noon, who left the Lancaster-York area to settle and farm the rich land of this township. They had 11 children. Isaac, Barbara Varner's husband, was their 11th child. He was born April 28, 1829.

In 1853, John Noon Sr. and his wife, Mary, donated land off the Frankstown Road for construction of a church. It was known as the Noon Charge and later as Mount Carmel United Brethren Church. The original building burned down.

Original trustees included John Noon Sr.; his son, Benjamin Noon, and Peter Lehman. Benjamin went on to serve as a United Brethren minister for 50 years. His brother, Adam, also was a preacher.

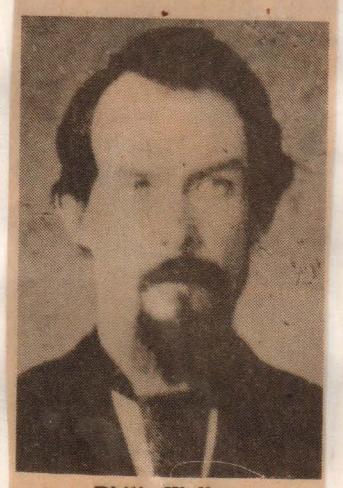
Mrs. McFeaters, who with her husband, Robert, operate a sign-making business in Geistown Borough, regrets that she doesn't have one of Barbara Noon's handmade quilts.

"She made many, but I don't have a one," Mrs. McFeaters said. "Our family considered them a practical bed-covering and used them until they wore out. I do have quilts and quilt-tops made by her granddaughters and great and great-great-granddaughters as family projects."

Mrs. McFeaters said one of Barbara Noon's great-great-great-great granddaughters has a piece of fabric woven of flax which was grown in the area. It had been made by Barbara's daughter, Rebecca, the wife of Philip Walker.

1925 photo covers 6 generations

The two youngest people in this 58-year-old, six-generation photo still are living. Eva Singer, then six months old and now the wife of Robert L. McFeaters of 215 Walters Ave., is the baby. She is being held by her great-great-great grandmother, Barbara (Varner) Noon, then 93. Mrs. McFeaters' mother, Thelma (Erb) Singer, then 21, behind Mrs. Noon, resides at the Arbutus Retirement Center in Richland Township. Barbara Noon's oldest child, Rebecca (Noon) Walker, 75, is seated at left. Completing the six generations are Thelma Singer's late mother, Elsie Rosella (Erb) Weigle, 37, (center), and Elsie's mother, Emma Jane (Walker) Erb, 54. The span of birth dates covers 94 years. The photo was taken Sept. 1, 1925, at the Scalp Level home of Jane Hershberger, daughter of Barbara Noon.



Philip Walker
Union soldier

Sesquicentennial Scrapbook #56

Baumgardner clan part of Richland Township

By James W. Siehl
and
Lois J. Siehl

A group of old photos and a book in which his great-grandfather, Joseph Bomgardner, had noted personal transactions are among articles of value prized by Donald G. Baumgardner of 300 Kerr Drive, Richland Township.

Recorded are substantial gifts Joseph Bomgardner had passed on to his four children. The time period was back when many folks couldn't read or write. Those unable to as much as sign their name did the best they could. Under a listing of gifts in 1901 to Mary Jane Bomgardner, the couple's only daughter, great-grandmother Bomgardner, had made her mark. A small x, under which "mark" had been written, was placed between Mary Ann and Bomgardner. N. J. Hoffman witnessed the signature. Mary Jane became the wife of Rolla Coplin.

Mary Jane's gifts included $1,500 in cash, the equivalent of $1,500 in land the pioneer farmer had given each of his three sons; one bedroom suit, valued at $19; one organ, valued at $50; one sewing machine, valued at $30; one cow, valued at $25; one pig, valued at $1; and "a lot of chickens", valued at $1.

Baumgardner family reunion

Details are scant on this old picture of a Baumgardner family reunion. The first two people seated (left to right) are Lizzie Jane Baumgardner and her husband, Joseph A., grandparents of D. G. Baumgardner, who supplied the photo. The picture probably was taken in front of the Joseph A. Baumgardners' homestead, still standing along Schoolhouse Road.

In keeping with consideration extended to her three brothers, Mary Jane also received one share in the Johnstown and Scalp Level Pike. The value of the share was set as $25. The column of figures was added, with the total coming to $1,626. An additional listing of $46 was recorded Feb. 28, 1913.

According to the ledger, Joseph Bomgardner started sharing his property and possessions with his children 20 years earlier. He wrote:

"In the year A.D. 1881, I Joseph Bomgardner give and be willed to my son Jacob Bomgardner fifteen hundred dollars in land and one horse for 130 dollars, one cow for $25, one bed for $15, one pig for $1, a lot of chickens $1 and one Share in the Johnstown & Scalp Pike $25."

Same gifts

Identical lists — the $1,500 in property, horse, cow, bed, pig, chickens and a $25 share in the road — were given to the couple's other two sons. Emanuel received his gifts in 1882 and his brother, Joseph A., three years later.

Joseph A., Don Baumgardner's grandfather, married Lizzie Jane Barndt. The couple also had four children. They included:

Ira, who married Rose Bloom; Grant, who wed Luella R. Weaver (Don's parents); Mabel, who married George Crawford; and Faustin, who married Hazel Helsel. Only Hazel survives. She resides along the Elton Road.

Baumgardners, with the spelling both Bomgardner and Bumgardner, were very early settlers in the area. The name appears in record books before 1800. Before the turn of the current century, Bomgardners had acquired about 450 acres of prime farmland in the township. Of German ancestry, they were part of the Mennonite organizers of the Weaver Church along Scalp Avenue.

A branch of the clan helped settle the Scalp Level area. Among them was Adam Baumgardner, who helps underline just how far the Baumgardner tradition goes back into township history. It is recorded that in 1825 Adam Baumgardner married Mary Ann Ripple. She was the daughter of John Ripple, one of the first settlers in that territory.

Unsuccessful efforts

Efforts to establish a common ancestor to the Bomgardners on Don Baumgardner's side of the family

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Where's the beef?

G. B. Baumgardner Meats, situated along Main Street in Paint Borough, used this horse drawn wagon for deliveries when the photo was taken in 1910. The picture was made from a glass negative found in an attic at the one-time residence of photographer Fred Rodda in Walsall, Richland Township. The photo, reproduced by William McQuilken, was provided by Dave Samuel, retired teacher of the Richland School District.

Turn of the century photo

This turn-of-the-century photo is owned by Donald G. Baumgardner of 300 Kerr Drive. It was taken on his late grandfather's farm. Grandfather Joseph A. Baumgardner stands beside the farm wagon. Holding th
Grant (left) and Faust
gardner. Grant was D.
gardner's father.

Sesquicentennial Scrapbook #57

The Laymans, the Shanks and other memories of Richland

This old farmhouse has changed

This old Richland Township farmhouse still is in use, although its appearance has changed noticibly since it was constructed in 1903 by Grant and Ida (Fye) Custer. It is the house with a big yard adjacent to a PATWIL model home along Bedford Street between Lane Street and Luther Road. A front porch extending around the side of the house has been removed and the large windows have been replaced with smaller ones by the owner, Arthur E. Costanzo of 2859 Bedford St. "The house was built the year I was born," said Ruth (Custer) Hardy of 352 Dark Shade Drive, Windber. She is the little girl on the left posing with her late sister, Esther, and "Black Beauty," their mother's buggy horse. Mrs. Custer can be seen standing on the porch. According to Mrs. Hardy, her father had purchased the horse and buggy for Mrs. Custer because of her poor health. Mrs. Hardy remembered the house as having a parlor, a sitting room, a dining room and a kitchen — all very large rooms — and a pantry on the first floor. The house also included a full cellar, four large bedrooms and a small bedroom on the second floor with a hallway through the center and a full attic. Mrs. Hardy's father sold the farm to Alvin Wertz and moved into a house he had built nearby along Cherry Lane.

The John P. Layman family

This photo of the John P. Layman family features a farmhouse which was built before the turn of the century. It still stands at the junctions of Oakridge Drive, Leventry Road and Bedford Street. As a traffic safety factor, the property recently was moved some 25 feet to improve visibility. Ruth Walker is its current occupant. The house originally was built for Louis and Emma (Hershberger) Helsel before the Laymans took possession. Only four people in the photo are living. Among them is Violet Smith, wife of A. Ted Luther, of 11 Wesley Drive. Mrs. Luther, who will be marking her 80th birthday anniversary in December, was only three or four years old when the picture was taken in about 1908. She is the one at left seated on the ground. Mrs. Luther's parents were Frank and Henrietta (Layman) Smith. John P. and Julia (Berkebile) Layman were Mrs. Luther's grandparents. Mrs. Luther' sister, Beatrice, and brother, Roy L. Smith, are sitting with her on the grass. Beatrice, wife of Wilbur Wolf, resides at the Carriage Hills Apartments. Brother Everett Smith is in the high chair. Continuing (left to right) are Grandma Layman, holding Evelyn (Murphy) Dunmyer; Grandfather Layman and three children, Jane (Hershberger) Workman, Walter Hershberger and Chalmer Layman. Standing in the next row are (left to right) Frank Smith, Henrietta Smith, Annie (Layman) Hershberger, holding son Stanley; Elmer Hershberger, Howard Smith, Rose (Gramling) Thomas and Mildred Hershberger. Back (left to right) are Rose (Layman) Murphy, Emory Murphy, holding son Kenneth; Solomon Gramling, holding son Glenn; Ella (Layman) Gramling, Elizabeth (Erb) Layman, John H. Layman and Arthur Gramling. Others still living are Mrs. Luther's oldest brother, Howard, who resides in Chambersburg, and Evelyn Dunmire (the baby on Grandma's lap), whose home is in Salix.

The Hiram Shank family

Eliza (Hancock) Fisher of Arbutus Avenue provided this photo of the Hiram Shank family. It was taken in about 1913 on the Shank farm off Oakridge Drive. Mrs. Fisher remembers often traveling by horse and wagon with her parents to visit the Shanks. Mrs. Shank was a prominent midwife in that era.

Scrapbook suggestion

Readers of The Era may want to keep their own scrapbook of published pictures and stories about people and past events in Richland Township. The Era is carrying a series of features from data collected by the historical committee as part of Richland Township's sesquicentennial celebration.

Photo texts by James W. Siehl

Richland residents share memories of Easter season

#58

Sesquicentennial Scrapbook

By Lois J. Siehl

Looking back on Easter observances when she was a young girl, 78-year-old Erma (Hershberger) Shumaker of 2744 Bedford Street remembers that her family used to color eggs by cooking them in onion skins.

Tumerik and saffron root produced a yellow shade. Other eggs were colored with beet juice. Besides the colored eggs, the traditional Easter basket likely was to include yellow flannel chicks, jelly beans, paper bunnies, and possibly a picture post card.

No new dresses

According to the retired school teacher, she and her sisters seldom received new dresses. Sometimes they were surprised with new hats. One thing they could always count on, however, was getting new ribbons to bring a new look to the hair or hat or a dress. And, they always received a pair of new shoes for Easter because recitations by children were a regular part of the special Easter Church program, "and you couldn't stand up in church in your worn farm shoes," Erma said.

An Easter dinner of roast chicken or home canned pork tenderloin was the custom. The Hershbergers did raise rabbits for meat. Sometimes, the Easter menu included stuffed rabbit. Erma remembers her mother saying, "Now don't make a pet of this rabbit because I'm going to use him for a dinner."

The Hershberger family attended the old wooden Bethany United Evangelical Church, a forerunner of Bethany United Methodist Church. Erma said church services were held morning and evening on Easter, but there were no Maundy Thursday or Good Friday services. She said no work was done at their house on Good Friday. It always was a quiet, solemn day. Erma also recalled that there were no Easter flowers in the church or her home. If blossoms were available, they were used to decorate the church.

Another longtime resident of Richland Township, Martha Bloom of rear 413 Luther Road, remembered that church activities played a major part in her family's Easter celebration. Her family homestead was in the area of the Johnstown-Cambria County Airport.

She said her family also had used onion peels to color eggs. They always had a good chicken dinner with a traditional sponge cake for dessert. There were no new Easter outfits, but Mrs. Bloom said they could always expect a new winter hat and a new summer hat each year. Hats were worn everywhere a lady would go, according to Mrs. Bloom.

Summer hats were made of straw or lace.

Easter baskets

She said the children received Easter baskets with hard-boiled eggs and occasionally fruit and one small choclate rabbit.

Sunday School class

Only two people are still living in this Sunday school class photo, which was taken about 75 years ago in front of the old wooden Bethany United Evangelical Church on Leventry Road. Notice the ladies' colorful bonnets. William Hershberger, the only male representative, was the teacher. His daughter, Erma, about 3, standing in the foreground, still resides across Bedford Street from the church, which has since been torn down and replaced by the Bethany United Methodist Church. Others (left to right) are: Kneeling — Mabel (Hershberger) Layton, Edna (Berkey) Wissinger and Sidney (Paul) Layton. Standing — Cora (Paul) Berkey, Barbara (Christ) Schrock, Daisy (McKinney) Keiper, Ida (Horner) Apt, Hilda (Miller) Kinzey and Stella (Groover) Koontz, who also is living.

Ninety-two-year-old Emma (Jacobs) Eash of Johnstown R. D. 7 remembers coloring Easter eggs with iodine. With 12 children in the family, she said there were no new Easter clothes — "not much celebration at all."

Mrs. Eash remembered walking to the Weaver Mennonite Church along Scalp Avenue from her home in Walsall every Sunday, weather permitting. As a sidelight, her neighbor, Elanora Happ, one of the women featured in an accompanying photo, made Mrs. Eash's wedding dress and some of her better clothes.

Candy eggs

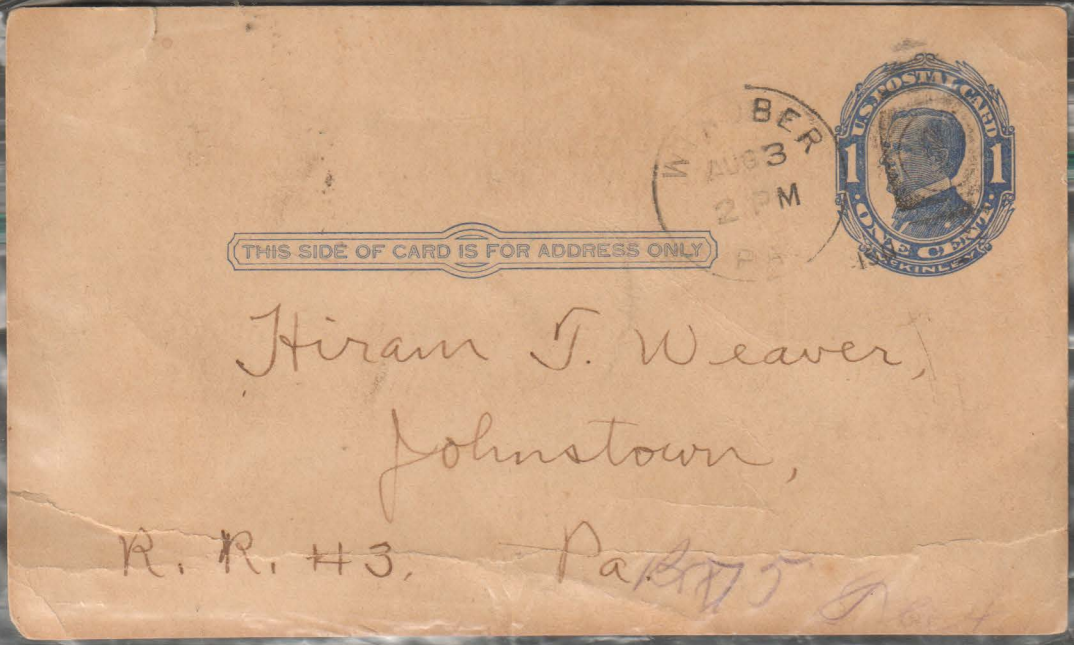
Suie Wingard, who is 87 and still resides in the old family homestead along Oakridge Drive, said she used to make candy eggs for Easter, using mashed potatoes and powdered sugar covered with a frosting of chocolate. A Mennonite, she noted that it was the custom of the church for the women not to wear fancy hats.

Sunday outing

A Sunday outing near Walsall, the former coal mining village off Eisenhower Boulevard, was the occasion for this old photo. The picture was produced from a glass negative found in the Nagle homestead in Walsall. Eighty-seven-year-old Rose (Moss) Edwards, who still resides in Walsall, helped with the following identifications, listed left to right: Front — Mary Kunkle, Liz Nagle, Elva Orris. Center — Clara Happ, Elanora Happ and Rose Happ. Back — Charles Nagle and Bill Kunkle.

Penny postcard

This one-cent Easter postcard, postmarked April 9, 1908, was received by George Duman of Walsall, Johnstown R. D. 3. Written in pencil was the following message: "Many thanks for your postal. I am well and I am sorry that your nose is broken. Answer soon." It was signed by Minnie M. Weaver.



Found with #58

Geistown, Pa,, July 1, 1911.

To Hiram T Weaver

You are hereby notified that the rate of School taxation for the fiscal year current is 5 16 mills.

The valuation of your property is - - - - - $ 160.00

Your Occupation is - 1.00

Total, - - $

The amount of your School Taxes for which you are liable for the current year is - - - - - - $ 2.50

That said taxes are now payable and will be received by me as follows:

At Custer School,	Sept. 21, from 2 to 6 p. m.	
At Walsall,	Sept. 27,	" 9 to 12 a. m.
At Mine 37,	Sept. 27,	" 2 to 5 p. m.
At Geistown,	Sept. 29-30	" 2 to 5 p. m.

Full amount charged against you will be collected for 90 days after the date of this notice.

On and after October 1st five (5) percentum will be added on all delinquent taxes, as provided by the Act of May 1, 1909, No. 196, and the Act of May 5, 1911, No. 123.

NATHAN HOFFMAN,
Collector of Taxes for Richland Township

Old census tells of young Richland Township

By James W. Siehl
and Lois J. Siehl

A 60-year-old, 14-by-16-inch ledger, in which C. P. Trent, numerator, had recorded the 1924 census in Richland Township, surprisingly has a lot to say about the character of the young developing farm and coal community.

Ninety-one years after its incorporation as a township, the population stood at 1,935. With large tracts of land claimed for farming, the population had remained fairly stable, numbering about 1,335 between 1870 and 1914. In the next 10 years, it had increased at the average of 60 a year.

Young people

In 1924, according to an analysis of Mr. Trent's census information, the late Earnest L. Giffin calculated that nearly half of the population was under 19. The Johnstown R. D. 2 man listed 913 residents as under 19 and 1,022 people over that age. The total population included 989 males and 946 females. The livestock count was set at 276 horses and 424 cows.

Among the inhabitants were 96 men and women who had come to this country as immigrants. At least half of them were from Germany. Quite a few were Austrians, and a sizable number came from England. There also were a few from Poland and one family from Canada. With the opening of coal fields in the township, the newcomers settled in the areas of Mine 37, Mine 40 and Walsall.

Farmers, miners

According to Mr. Giffin's figures, there were 125 farmers, 90 miners, 138 laborers, 27 domestic workers, 11 teachers, four contractors, eight machinists, 14 truck drivers, 22 merchants, 13 clerks and 10 retired people in the township in 1924.

In addition, there were eight watchmen, six engineers, six electricians, four agents, four salesmen, four firemen, four managers, three butchers, three stenographers, two students, two herdsmen, two painters, two repairmen, two druggists and two blacksmiths.

One of each of the following also was listed:

Member of the U. S. Navy, conductor, music teacher, organist, printer, plasterer, molder, mason, supervisor, congressman, fire boss, foreman, repairman, sheriff, collector, attorney, minister, railroad foreman and weighmaster.

In 1924, Mr. Giffin resided along the old South Fork Road with his daughters, Hazel and Agnes, and a farm helper, Peter Layman.

Mellow mood

At age 74, when he completed the report, he had been in a reminiscent as well as philosophical mood. "I well remember when I could name every one living in Richland Township in 1900," he wrote.

Jotted down also were recollections of riding a merry-go-around at Jacoby's Store in Walnut Grove. "I hooked the brass ring several times for a free ride. That was 70 years ago." His memory also swept him back to when he was six years old, and his father took him to the former John Thomas Store along Main Street in Johnstown and bought him his first suit of clothes.

Concerned about morals

A concern for this country's moral fiber also was evident. He wrote on the back of the statistical sheet:

"It is long past time that everyone of us understood the deadly sickness in our society and went to work on a cure. Each one of us must help turn back the tide of moral laxity. We must get interested in our children and what they hear, see and do. And, we must get tough with ourselves. We must measure our every act by the single stringent (standard) that made us a great nation."

C. P. Trent was 38 years old when he recorded the 1924 census. He and his wife, Edyth, resided on the Salix Road (now Oakridge Drive) with their sons, Kenneth and Harold, and daughters, Beatrice and Bernice. Harold Trent, who resides on Johnstown R. D. 2, donated his father's old ledger to the Richland Township Sesquicentennial Historical Committee.

Census areas

C. P. Trent listed the following areas covered in the census:

South Fork Road, Franklin Road, Frankstown Road, Hornick Road, Bloom Road, Shaffer Hill Road, Solomon Run Road (17 homes), Fullmer Hill Road (nine dwellings), Jerry Walter Road (Walters Avenue), nine homes there.

Salix Road, 26 homes; Bedford Road (now the Elton Road), 16 homes; Elton to Scalp Level Road (Theatre Drive); Recreation Park Road (Berwick Road); Hoffman Crossing Road (Mine 40 Road).

Scalp Level Pike (Scalp Avenue-Route 56), 19 homes; R. M. Luther Road, four homes; George Orris Road; Mine 37 to Walsall Road, nine houses; Hiram Weaver Road, three houses; Walsall, 25 houses; Ingleside (now site of sewage-treatment plant), 15 homes, for engineers and maintenance personnel for the Crescent Pipeline Co., which operated a pumping station to pump oil across the Allegheny Mountains.

Krings, 13 homes; Rocky Hollow Road, 12 properties; Mauris Lehman Road, five houses; Arbutus Park district, 19 houses; Oakmont (Belmont area), 55 homes; and Geistown, 63 homes.

Of course, it is not possible to list all of the township inhabitants in 1924, but perhaps these names may bring back memories of some fond experiences:

Family names

Fullmer Hill Road residents — William Rose, A. G. Neatrour, William Heidingsfelder, Atwood Green, John Fedor, William Storck, Walter Weller, Bert Neatrour and C. B. Roberts.

Jerry Walter Road residents — Peter Speicher, John E. Miller, T. H. Berkey, Durbon Barefoot, Harry Pritt, George Matula, James Steckman, Elmer Layton and Leander Allen.

Recreation Park Road — Ella Custer, Lamon Grush, Samuel Hoffman, Albert Lanvin, Daz Mihalko, Levi Hawn, Isaac Lehman, Anton Wagner and Patsy Lombardi, then the only resident of Italian heritage in the township.

R. M. Luther Road residents — R. M. Luther, D. H. Yoder, J. Daniel Luther and Oscar Yoder.

Mauris Lehman Road residents — Mauris Lehman, Stephen Weaver, E. H. McCue and Vistor Miller.

Yesterday's children

These children were part of coal-mining families who settled in the Village of Walsall. The photo, taken in about 1900, was printed recently from a group of glass negatives found in the attic of the former Mat Nagle house in Walsall. Its use in the Sesquicentennial Scrapbook series was made possible by Dave Samuel and Tim Duffy. Left to right, the children are: Front — Anna Nagle and Mary Eash. Back — Gussie Eash, residing in Florida; Charlie Nagle, Tina Nagle (taller girl), Emma Eash and Norbert Eash. Emma Eash of Johnstown R. D. 7, now 92, assisted with the identification, along with her sister Rose (Eash) Merrits. Mr. and Mrs. Levi Eash were the parents of the Eash children.

Plain people

Sally Stewart, an award-winning contempory artist, created this ink drawing of the "Plain People," who helped along with the farmers, coal miners, merchants, laborers, teachers and others to shape Richland Township's 150-year history. Miss Stewart, a township native, is a product of the Richland School System and is well known for her artistic skill

Reprint

This photo of Emma Sheets is another printed from glass negatives found recently at the former Mat Nagle homestead in Walsall. Her father, Stephen Sheets, a coal miner, came to Richland Township from Germany in 1890.

Of Eisenhower Boulevard and the Hockstetler Indian raid

#60

By James W. Siehl
and
Lois J. Siehl

Seventy-six years ago, a section of Eisenhower Boulevard extending north from what is now Scalp Avenue (Route 56) toward Theatre Drive, was little more than a single dirt lane running through the corn fields.

An accompanying photo provides a backward glance at the way this busy area looked back in 1908, long before suburban sprawl began to reach out to Richland Township, mixing in city-style living and setting the stage for the development of the area as a major residential and business community.

The barn, homestead and furrowed fields all are in stark contrast to the shopping centers on either side of the old road now, which of course is Eisenhower Boulevard.

To help with your bearings, traffic now flows east and west over Route 56 at the bottom of the old photo. The Gee Bee buildings in the University Park Shopping Center now occupy the area to the left. To the right would be the Hills Plaza Shopping Center.

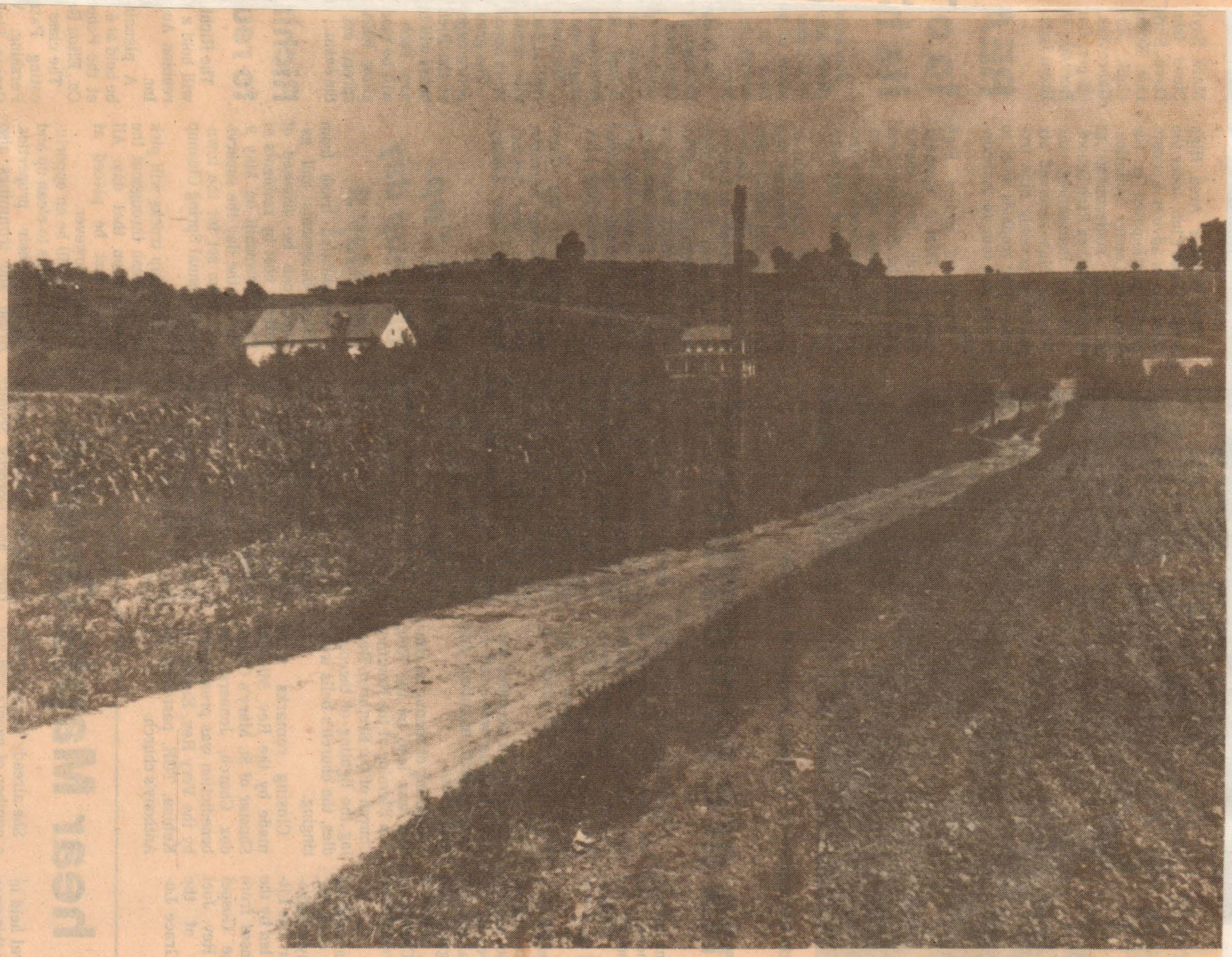
Twenty-nine years later, there was so little regard for the old road that a petition to vacate it was approved by the Court of Quarter Sessions of Cambria County Sept. 9, 1929.

It was noted that the road "has excessive grades and has become useless, inconvenient and burdensome to the taxpayers."

The petition was prepared by members of the Permanent Board of Viewers of Cambria County and signed by S. E. Dickey, Philip E. Caulfield and Dixon Tomb, viewers.

No objections

The petition stated that none of the property owners abutting the road had voiced objection to the proposal. They included Abram Hostetler, Stephen Hostetler, James Weaver, Levi Wingard and the Wilmore Real Estate Co.



Area that now is Eisenhower Boulevard

Abram and Stephen Hostetler were sons of Henry Hostetler, who was born in 1842 in Scalp Level. Henry Hostetler at one time owned some 400 acres of land, including the land now occupied by the aforementioned shopping centers.

Henry Hostetler's ancestors, three and four generations back, had come to the area from Eastern Pennsylvania.

Part of the property owned by Henry Hostetler is traced back to a Cambria County deed recorded April 10, 1848, when Jacob and Barbara Eash transferred 170 acres of land to Peter Hochstetler for the sum of $3,000. The ground was referred to as part of a larger tract of land called Spring Grove on waters of Paint Creek, Cambria County, which had been surveyed May 13, 1774, for Stephen Mortin and, subsequently, sold to Jacob Eash.

Hochstetler is a common Amish and Mennonite name which originated in Canton Bern, Switzerland. According to "Notes from the Eash-Blough Family Tree," the name probably comes from Hochstatt, meaning a high place.

"In the region of Schwarzenburg, about 20 miles south of the city of Bern, the communes of Guggisberg and Wahlern each have a 'hof' or farm hamlet named Hostett. These are generally recognized as the places where the family originated during the period 1400-1500 when family names began to come into use. The name is still common in the area," the publication states.

Severe persecution caused the Hochstetlers to flee their villages. Jakob Hochstetler, ancestor of numerous American Amish and Mennonite families, landed in Philadelphia Sept. 1, 1736. He settled first in Lancaster County, and in time secured warrants for more than 500 acres of land, but never paid in full for any of them to obtain a government deed.

Peaceful relations between the Indians and the German settlers in eastern Pennsylvania came to an end with the French and Indian War. In 1756 and 1757, Indians began attacking settlers along the Blue Mountains — then the western limit of white settlements.

Jakob Hochstetler (also spelled Hockstetler and Hockstetter) had cleared a farm in a settlement on the Northkill, a rapidly flowing creek, which came under Indian raids.

Indians attack

The Hockstetler cabin was attacked the night of Sept. 19, 1757. Details of an ensuing massacre have been handed down in family tradition and may or may not be historically correct.

According to tradition, the sleeping Hockstetler family had been awakened by their pet dog making unusual noises. Jakob Jr. supposedly was shot in the leg when he opened a door to investigate. His brothers, Joseph and Christian, picked up their guns to defend the family but were forbidden by their father, who said it was not right to take another man's life — even to save his own.

After the Indians set fire to the cabin, the family took refuge in the cellar. Attempts were made to douse the flames with cider. By daybreak the heat had become so unbearable that the family started crawling out a cellar window, hoping the Indians had gone. One young brave, according to legend, had remained behind gathering ripe peaches. He sounded the alarm. Mrs. Hockstetler, the story goes, was heavy and had trouble climbing out of the window. When the Indians returned, they surrounded the family members.

Jakob, Christian and Joseph were taken captive. Mrs. Hockstetler, a daughter and Jacob, the wounded son, were killed and scalped — the premise being they could not have traveled well. Two older Hockstetler children, John and Barbara, no longer had been living at home.

Jakob escapes

The Indians fled over the Blue Mountains with their captives. Jakob and his sons were separated in captivity. Eventually, however, in about 1760, Jakob managed to escape somewhere in the vicinity of what is now Detroit, Mich. He slowly made his way back to Berks County, where in 1762 he petitioned to Governor Hamilton for assistance in reuniting him with his captive children, then aged 18 and 16.

Whether because of the petition or other influence, the youths eventually were released to their father. According to tradition, they reported they had been treated kindly by the Indians. In fact, Joseph is said to have adapted to Indian customs so well that he was uncertain whether he wanted to return to white civilization.

On Nov. 18, 1773, Jakob Hochstetler deeded 150 acres of the old farm to his son, John, for the sum of 460 pounds. Jakob is said to have died in 1776.

The Hochstetler massacre story has been retold in a chapter of Elizabeth Hershberger Bauman's children books, "Coals of Fire" (1954), and the drama, "Joseph, Put Down that Gun!," which played in 1973 at the Dutch Family Festival in Lancaster. It is also documented in seven other publications.

Here's a look at early government in Richland Township

#61

Sesquicentennial Scrapbook

By James W. Siehl
and
Lois J. Siehl

True to the independent spirit of early America, extensive government in Richland Township neither was desired nor needed.

Many names of people native to the township appear in records chronicling the business activities of both the school board and the municipal government.

It soon becomes apparent that in the township's developing years, many of those who agreed to serve on those bodies did so from a sense of duty rather than any ambitions along political lines. Dawn-to-dusk work on farms left little time or the inclination for the wheels of government.

Besides the operation and maintenance of schools, early government naturally gravitated toward assuming responsibility for the primitive road network. The elected office of township supervisor in essence was a position of road supervisor, and the salary was small.

A group of workers would assemble to "shape up" one of the narrow, dirt routes connecting the homesteads with the main thorofares. Some of the workers would be paid. Some might have been farmers, whose crop had failed, and had joined the road crew to "work off" their property taxes. There also would have been teenage boys anxious for diversion from their day-to-day farm routine and the opportunity to be around the rollers and other heavy equipment. Of course, this mixture of men-and-boy power would need a supervisor.

Dusty roads

A grader and roller would scrape and roll the roads each spring. The work would create huge dust clouds, but nobody seemed to worry about dusty roads in those days.

By 1922, only about three miles of township-owned roads had hard surfaces. A section of the old road going through the coal-mining community of Walsall (Eisenhower Boulevard) was the first paved, township route. It had been preceded by several one-lane macadam roads and a brick road to Elton, but those were maintained by the state.

In the early years between 1833 and the late 1880s, annual statements of receipts and expenses of the supervisors were nothing more than a few sentences signed by the auditors.

As an example, in 1880 Peter P. Lehman, treasurer, listed receipts of $1,643.55 and expenses at $1,509.42, with a notation that $134.13 was due the district. Except for "Teachers Wages $1,000," there was no itemization. The names of Moses Miller and Jacob Foust appear as auditors.

Itemized financial statements for 1890 were published by supervisors Ephraim Berkey and Christian Miller. Mr. Berkey reported income totaling $458.37 and expenses to match. "Work on the road" accounted for all but $105.57 of the amount. Mr. Miller's statement also was balanced — $801.78 in receipts and the same amount in expenses. Work on the road once more the heavy expenditure — $550.84.

As road superintendents, Mr. Berkey and Mr. Miller were paid $1.50 per each working day. Mr. Berkey received $31.50 for 21 days, Mr. Miller $41.75 for 31½ days.

Gleaned from an old ledger is an order dated Oct. 1, 1904, which provides an inkling into the cost of road machinery in that era. The order is signed by L. D. Stull, H. C. Parker and Nathan Hoffman. And, it promises to pay the Climax Road Machine Co. of Marathon, N. Y., $250 for one Climax road machine.

Further indication that the township roadmasters weren't being overpaid for their labors appears in a published financial statement for the year ending March 7, 1910. Their salaries were recorded as follows:

H. F. Weaver, $90.60; Lewis Baumgardner, $59; Joseph A. Baumgardner, $48.50; Andrew Schaller, $147.75; and William Rose, $149.25.

Some of the itemized expenses that year included repairs for road machinery, $35; planks etc., $95.74; watering troughs, $12; stationery and fingerboards, $13.05; salary of secretary, $65; hardware and cement, $77.06; printing, $13.25; and maintenance of winter roads, $4,064.96, by far the largest expenditure.

By 1918, the total amount of funds available for road purposes had increased to $42,216, according to the annual financial statement by E. L. Giffin and Ira Bomgardner, township supervisors. The township received $18,192 from the state in duplicate road tax raised by the municipality.

In 1918, the township spent $22,991 for permanent improvement of township roads, $5,791 for maintenance of earth roads and $5,131 for opening and building new roads. Wages for roadmasters totaled $1,346.

In 1934, the going rate for eight hours of toiling on the roads was $3. An engineer was paid $4.50. A municipality could rent a two-horse team for $7 a day, and a truck for a dollar a day.

Meetings informal

Early supervisors' meetings were very informal. Mostly, they were held at the home of the board secretary, since all of the records, correspondence and the like were kept there.

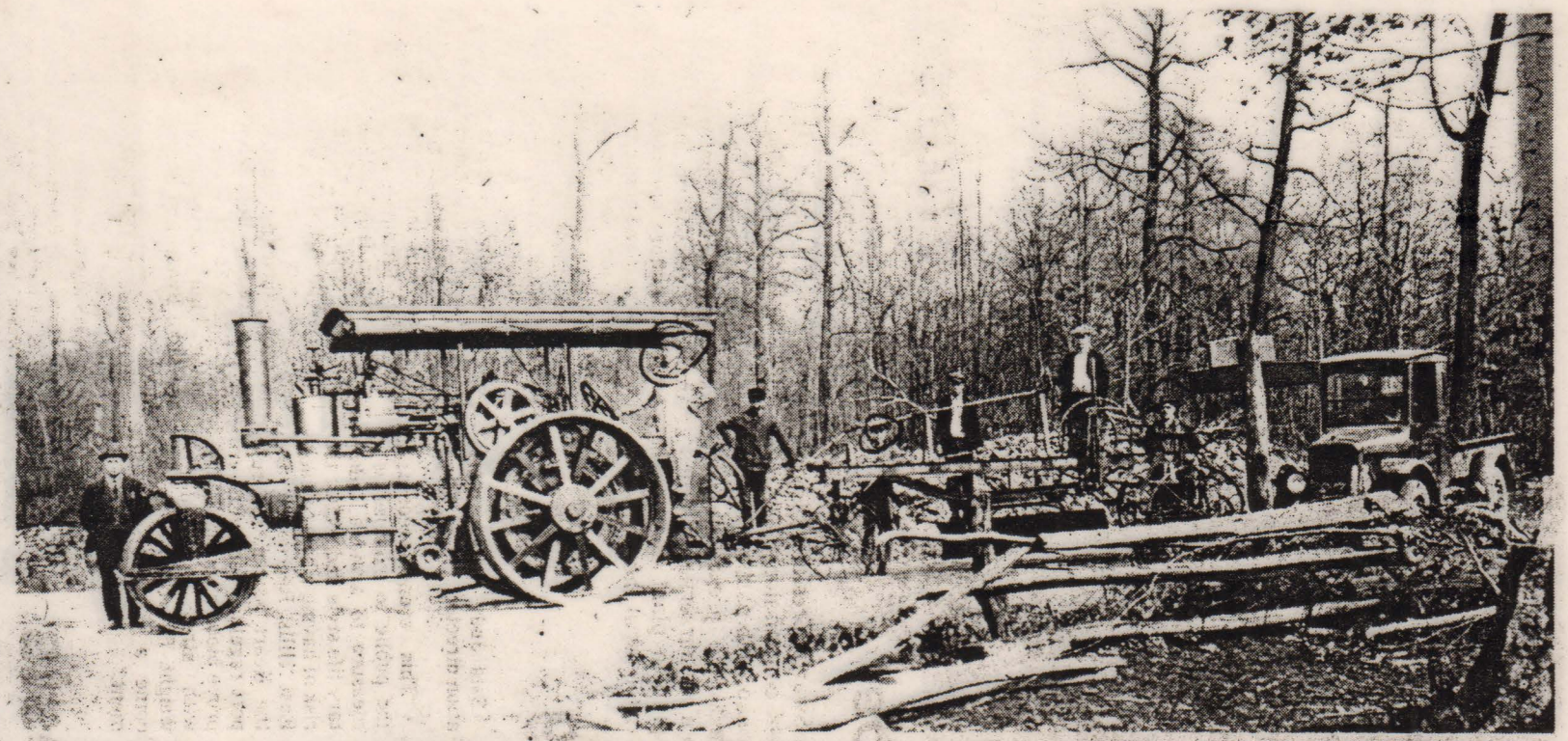
When Geistown still was a part of the township, the supervisors often met at the Harry Smith's Store and sometimes in the old Election House in the little village.

Records show that the board met Dec. 6, 1927, at Alex Weaver's house. On Aug. 1, 1929, the supervisors convened at the home of the board's chairman, A. S. Nowell, "on account of sickness."

An interesting note was recorded March 16, 1932. "No bills paid on account of insufficient funds."

When Herman O. "Dutch" Weaver became a suprvisor, he made arrangements for the board to meet in a cement block building which may be seen along Oakridge Drive in front of the Richland Trailer Court. Then, on Dec. 16, 1959, a decision was made to move the township offices to 400 Luray Ave. The space was rented at $30 a month from Kinamrok, Inc.

The old township equipment shed, also along Oakridge Drive about 300 yards east of the Mount Airy intersection, was built in 1917. Although not in the best of condition, it still STANDS



Richland road crew

Harold Trent, former Richland Township supervisor, has shared this old photo of a 1922 Richland road crew working at the intersection of Hunsinger Road and Mount Airy Drive in the township. Mr. Trent then was one of the road laborers. The heavy piece of equipment is a Galion steam roller and grader. Left to right are James Boyer, salesman for Galion Equipment Co.; Chester Trent (Harold's father), at the steering wheel; Samuel Meyers, Harold Trent and William Meyers, all laborers; and Alonzo Parker and Ernest Giffin, both supervisors. Harold Trent married Mr. Giffin's daughter.

Supervisors

Some of the early supervisors in the township include:

Frederick Custer and Jacob Faust, 1833; John Paul and Isaac Horner, 1852-53; Peter Lehman and Jacob Grumling, 1853-54; Frederick Custer and David Eash, 1855-56; Martin Stull and Frederick Custer, 1856-57.

Adam Strayer and David Eash, 1857-58; Jacob Foust, 1858-59; George Barkebile and Peter Hostedler, 1859-60; Aron Michael and Jacob Faust, 1860-61; Daniel Eash and Jacob Varner, 1862-63; Daniel Eash and Daniel Osler, 1863-65.

Joseph Rose and Lewis Donmyer, 1865-66; Isaac Harshbarger and Jacob Stineman, 1866-67; Jacob Stineman and David Eash, 1867-68; S. Blough and Tobias Miller, 1868-69; Daniel Harshberger and Tobias Stutzman, 1869-70; Jacob Miller and Phillip Stineman, 1870-71.

Peter Layman and Jacob Thomas, 1871-72; David Stull, 1872-73; David Stull and Joseph Custer, 1873-74; Jacob Thomas and David Stull, 1874-75; David Stull and Daniel Hershberger, 1875-76; Jacob Foust and David Stull, 1876-77; Noah Weaver and Jacob Varner, 1877-78.

Jonethan Bomgardner and Noah Weaver, 1878-79; Jory Harshberger and Christian Miller, 1879-80; Christian Miller, 1880-81; D. Lehman, S. Harshberger and I. Bombardner, 1881-82; Thomas Wissinger and William Custer, 1882-83; Harry Weaver and Felix Rivley, 1883-84.

Simon Bomgardner and Jonethan Bomgardner, 1884-85; Tobias Blough and Silvester Verner, 1885-86; Tobias Blough and Uriah Kring, 1886-87; Tobias Blough and David Stull, 1887-88; C. Miller and Daniel Yoder, 1888-89; Isaac Baumgardner and David Fyock, 1889-90.

Ephraim Berkey and Christian Miller, 1890-91; D. Rayman and John Ott, 1891-92; David Stull and J. D. Hershberger, 1892-93; T. Wissinger, A. Weaver and P. Rivley, 1893-94; Joseph Orris, Henry Custer and Herman Lape, 1894-95; H. W. Lape, Charles Shaffer and J. E. Feight, 1895-96.

J. E. Feight, Josiah Wingard and Charles Shaffer, 1896-97; Josiah Wingard, Charles Shaffer and D. H. Helsel, 1897-98; Harry Gillman, Hiram Weaver and Herman Lape, 1898-99; Adam Wissinger, Harry Gillman and Hiram Weaver, 1899-1900.

George McGrew, Jacob Varner, Hiram Weaver, 1900-01; Daniel Yoder, Hiram Weaver, L. D. Stull, 1901-02; D. Yoder, L. Stull and Nathan Hoffman, 1902-03; Abe Hostetler, L. D. Stull and Edward Wissinger, 1906-07; William Trent, Abram Hostetler and D. Stull, 1907-08.

Abe Hostetler, Charles Shaffer and William Trent, 1908-09; A. Baumgardner, W. Trent, C. Shaffer, 1909-10; A. Baumgardner, C. Shaffer and Noah Hoffman, 1910-12; E. L. Giffin, Ira Baumgardner and Josiah Wingard, 1913-17; E. L. Giffin, Earl Barefoot and Ira Baumgardner, 1918-19; and H. C. Parker, Frank Berkey and E. L. Giffin, 1920-22.

Scenic creek

Picturesque Paint Creek, a boundary between Somerset and Cambria counties, was a favorite subject for artists because of the sharp fall of its waters — making the stream a natural site for grist mills. This photo, printed from a glass negative, was taken about 1908.

You can trace #62

Richland's history on this old (1890) map

By James W. Siehl
and
Lois J. Siehl

With a bit of patience and perhaps a magnifying glass, one might enjoy rolling back the years mulling over this old map of Richland Township.

Reproduced from an 1890 atlas, it is complete with original markings. The larger names represent the very oldest land holdings. Smaller printed names designate land divisions and individual farms.

North of Scalp Level, near the bottom of the map, Little Paint Creek flows southwesterly toward its junction with Paint Creek and on to the Stony Creek at left.

How to read

The map has been subdivided into columns, which are lettered down the side and numbered across the bottom, to assist in locating specific points of interest.

As an example at Q-9, the "Toll Gate" designation was part of a toll road known as the Scalp Level Pike connecting Scalp Level and Geistown. It later became part of Route 56.

The turnpikes or toll roads first came on the scene in 1815, following original Indian trails.

Since there was no provision to maintain them, a pay-as-you-go system was adopted.

Toll gates were set up at intervals of two to five miles. And, a fee was extracted at each gate.

A horse and rider, as well as a yoke of oxen, paid 6½ cents. A two-wheel cart was charged 12½ cents; a cart and wagon with four wheels, 25 cents. If the cart was drawn by four horses, the fee was 37½ cents. It wasn't until 1924 that macadam roads began making their appearance.

Back to the map, the east-west route through Geistown (J) 94 years ago was called the Bedford Road. Folks now know it as the Elton Road.

Another key route then was the old Salix Road. Now called Oakridge Drive, on the map it extends northward to the left of the Peter Layman farm (H-8).

Belmont Street intersects the Scalp Level Pike in Geistown (J-5) and continues northerly to the Jerry Walters farm and Walters Avenue.

At that time, the village of Geistown still was a part of Richland Township. It had three taverns, a distillery, several mercantile stores, two blacksmith shops, a lumber mill, an ice pond and a slaughter house.

On land purchased in 1812, William Slick's farm (I-5) was a station for the underground railroad during the Civil War.

With supplies provided by the Cambria Iron Co., residents of Walsall built a swinging foot bridge across the Stony Creek (O-2).

Schools

Early schools may be located as follows:

Rachel Hill (L-11), Church Grove (M-7), Hoffman (P-12), Myers and Good Hope (G-7), the Red School, later Custer, then Meadowbrook (B-11).

Govier, then Highland (I-11), Geistown (J-6), Blough (K-4), second Blough (N-2), Walsall (P-4), Mine 37 (R-6), Weaver (O-7) and St. Benedict's (J-4).

Cemeteries in 1890 included the following:

Weaver Church (M-7), St. Joseph's (J-4), Yoder family plot on hillside at Mine 37 (Q-5), Blough family plot off Kring Street (L-3).

Wingard family plot on Rachel Hill knoll (M-9), Horner family plot (Q-14), Shaffer family plot (E-9) and Eash family plot (S-10).

Other landmarks include:

Krings Railroad Station and the bridge at Krings Station (M-1), Walsall area (O & P-3), Ingleside and Crescent Pipe Line Co. (Q-3), Abram Hostetler's greenhouse and saw mill (L-7), Mountain Orchard farm (Q-5), Wilmore Dairy and Wilmore potato storage (N-7).

Tobias Ashe (Eash) grist mill (S-9), Jacob Ashe saw mill (Q-13) and cider press (Q-14), Andrew Baumgardner cider press (N-7), Bethany Evangelical Church (J-7), Weaver Mennonite Church (M-7), St. Benedict's Church (J-4) and Arbutus Camp Ground (L-4).

A tour of the cemeteries in the East Hills area

#63

The Era, Tuesday, May 22, 1984

By James W. Siehl
and
Lois J. Siehl

They have new meaning now — the names on the tombstones. They almost leap for recognition. The Moses Millers. The John Bloughs. The Peter Keims. The Joseph Geises. The Hershbergers. The Hostetlers. The Varners. The Yoders — each with a story to tell.

They were the original land holders and other settlers who first brought farming to Richland Township in the early years, opening the way for churches, schools and mercantile businesses to follow.

More than a year of researching Richland's 150-year history has put a personality behind many of those memorials visited in the township cemeteries and family burial grounds.

Unlike most of the old family plots, many of which are losing the battle to neglect and occasional forays by vandals, the Blough family cemetery at the end of Clermont Street is a refreshing change.

Tidy, picturesque and ringed by tall trees, it is situated on a grassy knoll. The remains of Peter Keim, born 1802, and his wife, Lizzie, lie there. Peter Keim, one of the earliest inhabitants in the township, built a log cabin nearby on Krings Street. The remodeled structure is believed to be the oldest dwelling in Richland.

The remains of George Thomas are among the old graves in the Blough neighborhood plot. He was born in 1798 and died in 1836. His wife, Eve, also buried there, was born in 1799 and died in 1888.

Several Horners repose there as well. Among them is Harvey Horner, who was born in 1834 and died in 1903. Other old graves include Frederick (died in 1860) and Elizabeth Immartz (died in 1862) and a small number of Bloughs — John S. Blough, who died in 1899, and Noah, Sophia, John and Harry.

Peter Varner

The body of Peter Varner, who held one of the very earliest land designations in the township, is buried in a family plot known as the Shaffer cemetery. From Fulmer Road, near the Franklin Exit of the Johnstown Expressway, a steep dirt road winds northly to the top of a beautiful plateau where the small cemetery is located in a stand of trees.

Perhaps at one time there were more graves, but now only four are apparent. Although the engraving is faded, it is clear that Peter Varner was born in 1784 and died in 1852. "Go home my friendly sojourner," the inscription reads, "I am lay here till Christ appeareth." There were more lines on the time-worn stone, but exposure to the elements leaves too much to guesswork.

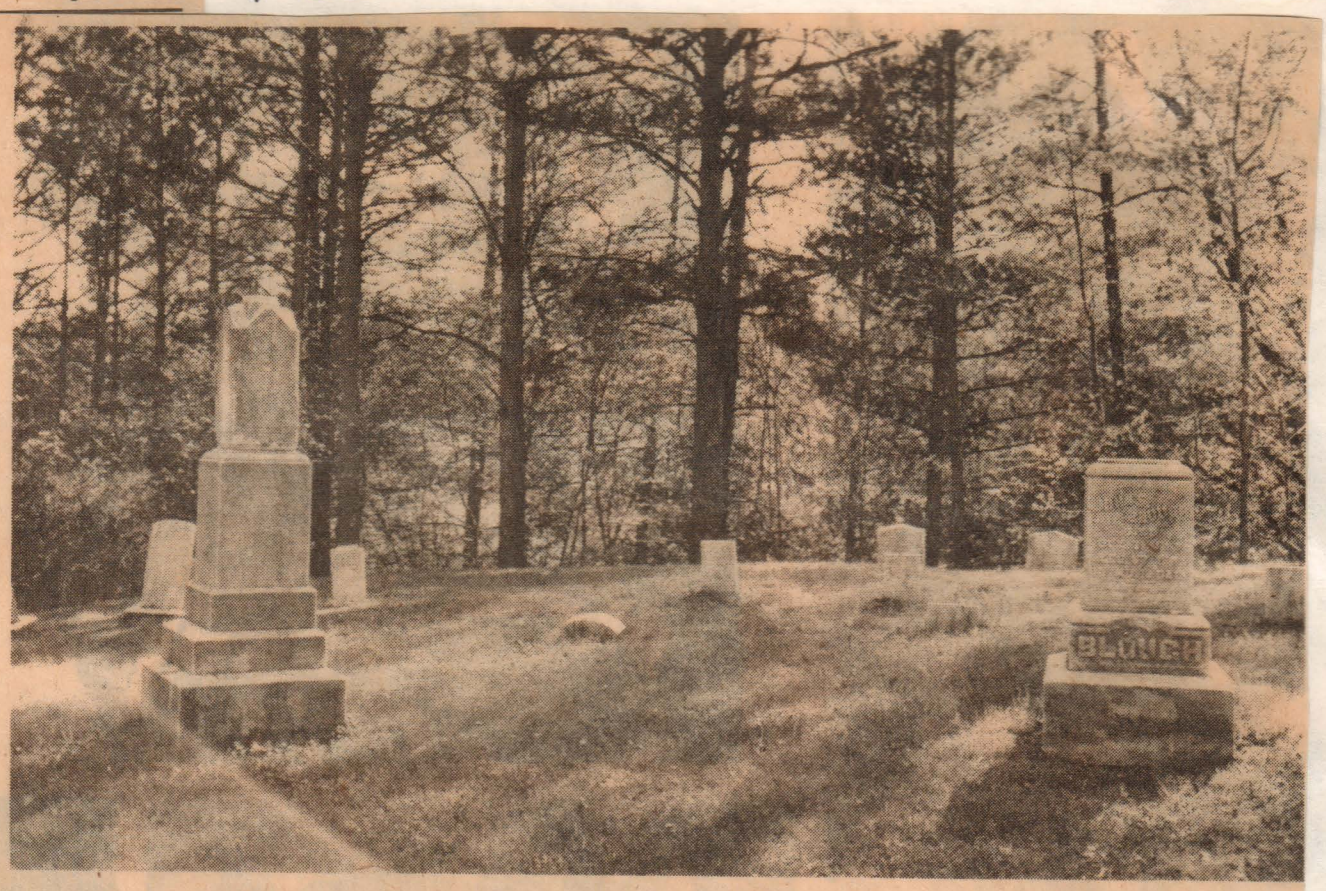
The remains of Atheter Varner are there, too, along with Mary Shaffer (born in 1815 and died in 1903). Their graves are among the profusion of May apples decorating the forest floor. Not far away, through the trees, the flight-service station at the Johnstown-Cambria County Airport may be seen.

St. Joseph's Cemetery in Geistown is an example of the more established cemeteries in the township. It was formed in 1870 on land obtained from Bernard Nees. Joseph Geis, founder of Geistown, and many of the Geis family descendants are interred in its large, well-kept grounds near St. Benedict's Catholic Church.

Traditionally, where possible, cemeteries are placed on high ground. Among them is an old family plot still receiving care. It is tucked away on a hillside a few blocks off Theatre Drive in the vicinity of high rise apartments in the area and adjacent to an electrical power station.

The neat burial ground, with its cluster of daffodils blooming in one corner, overlooks the panoramic majesty of the Laurel Hill Mountain range. This is the burial setting selected for ancestors of the Wingard-Eash-Weaver clan.

Interred there are Moses D. Eash, born in 1828, died in 1915, and Polly Eash, born in 1832, died in 1898. Levi Weaver, Barbara Weaver and Catherine Weaver all died as young adults in 1866, 1866 and 1879, respectively. The bodies of Jacob Wingart and his wife, Mabla Wingart, also are buried in the plot. Jacob was born in 1802 and died in 1880.



Blough plot

Blough Family Plot located at the end of Clermont Street (Belmont section), this well preserved family burial ground is the resting place of Peter Keim, one of the earliest settlers of Richland Township. The plot includes graves of people born before and shortly after 1800.

Old Line Cemetery

Old Line Cemetery, originally known as the Old School House Lot, is the small cemetery at the rear of the Weaver Mennonite Church, Scalp Avenue. It now includes more than 10,000 graves. It is operated by the Richland Cemetery Association. Some of the early leaders of the township are interred here.

On an overgrown hillside between Mine 37 and Eisenhower Boulevard, another family plot struggles among choking vegetation for survival. Ancestors of Yoders are buried there. Bushes so thick it is necessary to crawl through and a growth of new trees have all but covered the stone markers and tombstones. The area formerly was known as the Mountain Orchard Farm and later the Hamilton sheep farm.

Now a major cemetery in the township, the Richland Cemetery at the rear of the Weaver Mennonite Church originally was known as the Old School House Lot.

From minutes dated April 13, 1863, Emanuel Weaver, Isaac Hershberger and Jacob Holsopple, trustees of the Old School House Lot, met to elect officers. The results follow:

Jacob Holsopple, secretary-treasurer; John Stull, president; and Christian Weaver, vice president.

Emanuel Weaver, Isaac Hershberger and Jacob Holsopple were elected trustees. They succeeded Christian Lehman and Jacob Wetstone. The latter was the organization's first treasurer.

The group took action to timber and fence the graveyard; approved the sale of the school house to Jeremias Weaver for $7.50; and sold white oak timber to Christian Weaver for $6; red ash timber to Jacob Holsopple for $2; Spanish oak timber to Jeremias Weaver for 25 cents; and chestnut timber to Emanuel Weaver for $1.37.

Providing another glimpse of the economy of the period, at a meeting of the trustees Oct. 27, 1863, Martin Custer's low bid of $11.40 to clear and fence the graveyard was accepted.

In the early years, funerals always were held in a church. However, convenience was a factor during bad-weather months. If getting to the church was too difficult, the service was held later. Bodies were laid out in the homes, usually over a two-day period. And, sitting up all night at a wake service was customary.

Caskets were lowered into a rough box for burial.

Since 1951, provision has been available at the cemetery building to hold bodies during severe weather until graves may be opened.

In 1896, only five eight-grave lots were sold at $7 a lot.

A. Ted Luther of Wesley Drive, who has followed in his father's footsteps as an officer in the Richland Cemetery Association, recalls meetings of the trustees in his home.

Trustees

Referring to minutes at a January 1913 meeting for the year 1912, Mr. Luther said the trustees were A. Baumgardner, S. I. Hershberger, A. Hostetler, D. H. Yoder and R. M. Luther.

Eight lots were sold at $7.30 each in 1912. There were 21 internments. Total receipts amounted to $69.95. Seventy years later in 1982, there were 217 interments. Receipts and expenses were about $80,000.

As of May 18 this year, there have been 10,187 burials in the cemetery which was organized in 1863 and incorporated in 1892.

Another old family cemetery at the top of Luther Street in Scalp Level was established when the area was part of Richland Township. The ground was donated by Adam Kunkle. The 10-grave plot in a glade of trees and bounded by a playground is the resting place for Gahagans, Carvers and Dorothy Cable Foust (born in 1790 and died in 1865). Buried there also is the body of John Foust, a veteran of the War of 1812 with England. He was born in 1783 and died in 1861.

Large plot

One of the larger family plots in the township, one with possibly 70 graves, is the Horner-Snavely cemetery. A dirt road leads to it from a point near the Berwick Road junction with Route 160. The cemetery has been beautifully maintained in a setting of a farm pasture.

3 clans

Ancestors of clans representing Wingards, Eashes and Weavers are buried in this well-kept family plot overlooking a hillside near an electric power station a few blocks off Theatre Drive. The oldest grave commemorates the death of Moses D. Eash, who was born in 1828.

Peter Keim's last will

By James W. Siehl

Peter Keim, one of the early settlers of Richland Township, was quite ill when he made out his last will and testament.

Recognizing the mortality of his body and noting "that it is appointed for all men once to die," Mr. Keim first recommended "my soul unto the hands of Almighty God that give it" and also recommended that his body "be buried in a decent Christian burial."

Mr. Keim wrote that it was his desire that "all my just debts shall be paid." Unto his beloved wife, Elizabeth," he bequeathed cheese of three milk cows and stove and pipe and other articles in the house "as long as she remains my widow" along with "the two gray mares and the gears belonging to the said mares."

Mr. Keim also willed to his wife "one plow and harrow" and "as much grain as she will want for one year." She also was to have five hogs, five sheep (of which she is to make her own clothes), four beds and bed slats, one spinning wheel, also two chests and a clock, one table, two chairs, one coffee mill tub, one side saddle, one jack reel, two tin buckets "and as much hay as she will need for a year."

More items

Mr. Keim further provided for his wife one chair and churn and 12 milk crocks, three beehives, one matik, dung fork and pitch fork and as much seed grain as she will need for a year.

As for the remainder of his personal estate, Mr. Keim directed that his executors obtain an impartial appraisement and offer them for public sale "as soon as convenient after my death to be divided equally amongst my children."

"It is also my desire that at the decease of my wife or if she should contract matrimony that all my real estate shall be divided in equal share and share alike as above according to law."

Appointed as executors were his brother, Samuel Keim, and Isaac Kauffman. The will was dated Sept. 16, 1837.

A short time later, Peter Keim hanged himself.

These photos recall early years of Richland Township

#64

1938 "chicken coops" hauled students

These old flattop school buses affectionately were dubbed "chicken coops" back in the mid-30s when they were used to transport students in the Richland School District, according to Harold P. Trent of Johnstown R. D. 2., one of the drivers. The photo was taken Nov. 28, 1938, in front of the Geistown School — then the high school in Richland. Mr. Trent advised that the first school bus engaged by the school district was a 1928 Reo. The district then contracted the services of Howard "Curly" Wissinger for additional hauling. Mr. Wissinger, who also drove one of the buses, was the owner of the 1933-model Chevrolet "chicken coops" in the photo. The picture was shared by Adolph Weaver of 141 Western Ave. It originally belonged to his late father, Willis Weaver, also one of the drivers in the photo. Mr. Weaver lived to be 96.

Turned heads

Here he is folks. George Duman! Remember him? He's the gentleman mentioned in several traditional postcards featured in the Richland Township Sesquicentennial Scrapbook series — the one who received so many cards from female admirers. Small wonder! The handsome athlete was a member of the Walsall baseball team when the photo was taken. The year is not known. However, the penny postcards addressed to him were postmarked in 1908. The picture recently became available through the efforts of Dave Samuel and Tim Duffy. It was reproduced from a glass negative found in an attic at the Walsall residence of Charles Nagle.

Texts by

James W. Siehl

and

Lois J. Siehl

Heading for Arbutus Park campground

A group of churchgoers prepare for a summer outing at the former Arbutus Park Campground, now the home of the Arbutus Park Retirement Community in an area bounded by Ottawa Street and Arbutus Avenue. Before the automobile greatly increased the mobility of Americans, the Richland Township facility was a popular spot, and travel there by dray and a team of horses was common practice when this photo was taken. Work on clearing the land and building a tabernacle was started in 1904. By 1908, interest in the campground was producing crowds of up to 10,000 people for the recreational and spiritual programs.

Steam traction engine

These unidentified young men appeared to be dressed for church or some social function when they climbed aboard this old steam traction engine parked in the vicinity of Walsall. Machinery of any kind in the early 1920s, when this photo was taken, was a great attraction. Mostly used for threshing grain, this particular model also was equipped with a flat belt and flywheel on the opposite side which made it adaptable for other farm work as well. The picture was printed from a glass negative through the cooperation of Dave Samuel and Tim Duffy.

The Underground Railroad ran through Richland area

Sesquicentennial Scrapbook

#65

By James W. Siehl
and
Lois J. Siehl

Until the Civil War brought to an end the distasteful practice of human bondage in this country, slaves in Maryland, Virginia and other northern slave states continuously were trying to gain their freedom by escaping northward into Canada.

Their flight naturally adjusted itself along defined lines, and, like the physical forces of Nature, it sought the lines of least resistance. Lucrative rewards generally were available for the capture and detention of runaway slaves. And, this section was not without its men north of the Mason-Dixon line who resorted to seizing and restoring the frightened blacks to their owners for the cash prize involved.

Fortunately, sympathizers were willing to run the risk of a run-in with the law and sometimes physical consequences. They formed what was known as the Underground Railroad, discreetly providing food and shelter for the runaways as they advanced from station to station, often following the North Star.

Came from Bedford

It is part of Richland Township's history that the Underground Railroad came this way from Bedford County. William Slick, a prominent Richland landowner and township public office holder, regularly opened his Geistown-area home to the anxious slaves on their journey through Johnstown and then on north to Ebensburg and Cherry Tree in Indiana County.

The slaves' well defined line of travel extended through the Cumberland Valley to Bedford Borough, northward to the Quaker settlement (now Fishertown) and on to Pleasantville and across the mountain toward Johnstown.

According to a 1906 publication, "The History of Bedford and Somerset Counties," co-authored by E. Howard Blackburn and William H. Welfley, no "railroad stations" were available through the Cumberland Valley. However, several scattered "colored" families frequently aided their fellow Negroes. Slave-catchers were familiar with the travel route, too, and they watched the valley closely. Sometimes it was necessary to skirt the road and take to the mountain on either side in order to reach the safety promised in Bedford. There, they could count on help from either John Fiddler, Elias Rouse or Joseph Crawley — principal black agents of the "railroad business" in that country town. They arranged for the safe transport of the "passengers" to the Quaker settlement, where the Penroses, Ways or Millers assumed the responsibility of either advancing them along the usual line to Walker's, near the mountain, or, as they occasionally did, take them directly to the Blair County line by way of Claysburg and East Freedom.

From Walker's, according to Mr. Blackburn's research, the fugitives generally were taken across the Pleasantville Mountain to the home of William Sleek (also spelled Slick), near Geistown, and then through other trustworthy hands on to Clearfield County and on northward.

Active supporters

According to Mr. Blackburn, active Underground Railroad supporters in Bedford County among others included Amos, Samuel, William and Josiah Penrose, Eli Miller, Samuel Way, William Kirk, Samuel K. Miller, John Albaugh and Nathan Hammond, all of Fishertown, and Benjamin H. Walker, Samuel Hess, George Harbaugh, George Hess and John Hess, all of Pleasantville.

William Sleek relied on the local assistance of people such as Mr. and Mrs. James Heslop, John Meyers, Wallace Fortune, William Barnett, John Cushon, Henry Willis and Frederick Kaylor, according to information available.

Before Joseph Geis founded the Village of Geistown, the area was known as Slicksville. William Slick, the eldest child of John and Elizabeth (Winsome) Slick, was born in Hagerstown, Md., April 7, 1786. William Slick came to Johnstown in 1808, and operated a tannery along Main Street. Some years later, he moved to Geistown after receiving a land grant of 133 acres. He cleared the timber, built a fine house and turned to farming in addition to continuing his tannery operation. On this farm, which was situated north of the Geistown School, William Sleek resided the greater part of his life.

His popularity and influence in the community are reflected in the elected offices he held. As justice of the peace for many years, his signature is affixed to numerous offical documents of land transfer and other township business. At various times, he held the offices of school director, supervisor and constable. His political inclinations definitely were toward the counsel of the Whig Party and later those in the Republican circles. He was a big backer of "any measure which tended to the public welfare," quoting from Henry Wilson Story's 1907 publication, "History of Cambria County."

In 1807, William Slick married Rebecca Hemphill. She was born in Bedford County, daughter of Robert and Nancy (Carney) Hemphill. They had nine children. William Slick lived to old age. He died in 1876 at the age of 90.

His pioneer ancestor and great-grandfather, Dr. John Slick, emigrated to America from Holland, the place of his birth, and settled in Hagerstown, Md. He married Margaret Adams. William Slick's father, John Slick II, was born in Hagerstown. He eventually made his home in Bedford County and married Elizabeth Winsom. They had six children. John Slick worked in a blacksmith shop and was a local preacher of renown.

A sketch paraphrased from the diary of James Blackburn, grandfather of E. Howard Blackburn, the aforementioned author, provides a glimpse into the tenacity of the runaway slaves to gain their freedom as well as the cruelty they at times faced from their opposition.

According to the account, two runaway brothers from Virginia, aged 20 and 21, respectively, and property of one master, arrived at Bloody Run in Bedford County accompanied by two other slaves, taking lodging at a private home early in the year of 1837.

During the night, pursuers came upon them and threatened violence if they did not surrender. The Negroes resolved to fight for their liberty, and gave a terrific battle, although of short duration. The brothers' companions, making the least resistance, were taken into custody, and not heard of afterward. The brothers, however, succeeded in escaping, but not before one of them received a pistol shot wound of his cheek.

They made their way to Bucks Town (St. Clairsville), where a man of their own race admitted them for a brief reprieve until a recruited force arrived at the house. Another pitched battle developed, this time resulting in one of the pursuers receiving a hatchet wound of the hand. The brothers once again managed to disappear into the blackness. Chased by eight or 10 men, they took to what was called the "Johnstown road." About 18 to 20 miles in the distance, they spent the remaining hours to daybreak at Hetzel's house in the mountain. However, upon arising in the morning, and before they were dressed, their pursuers were spotted approaching the structure.

Another struggle

The brothers hurried into their clothes and met the party at the door, where another struggle ensued with the man of the house joining the fight on the side of the pursuers. One of them grabbed a small ax and used it to knock one of the slaves to the floor with a blow to the head. When a few of the men attempted to bind the dazed man, "his brother by his own exertions kept them from their purpose until the brother arose and they together again succeeded in making their escape."

Still being followed with increased vigilance, there was more violence ahead. The would-be captors had pressed into service two young men who had been hunting with muzzle-loaders. If the Negroes could not be taken otherwise, the hunters had orders to shoot them. And, that is what they did. One of the brothers was shot in the shoulder — the ball lodging in his chest — and the other was severely injured with a wound of his knee.

According to the narrative, their pursuers advanced upon them having no doubt that their prize was won. The man who had received the hatchet injury to his hand, identified only as J. G., was about to spring upon one of the blacks who had fallen to the ground from his wound. He called to one of his companions to cut the bridle from J. G.'s horse to tie the captive.

At this point, however, his brother demonstrated his determination not to return to slavery. He cried out not to cut the bridle, "for," said he, "you don't have us yet." He then threw a stone which struck J. G. in the chest and dropped him to the ground. The slave on the ground, seeing a ray of hope, got to his feet and while attention was directed to the condition of J. G., the brothers moved forward as rapidly as they could.

They next arrived at the home of William Sleek, who was much alarmed over their condition and wanted to know how they had gotten that way and whether they had murdered anyone. The fugitives assured Mr. Sleek that they had killed no one and briefly told them their tragic story. Mr. Sleek assured them that he would protect them from further assault just before their pursuers came on the scene. According to the account, the infuriated Mr. G. went on like a madman:

"He told Sleek that he was a sworn officer and had authority to take the Negroes (he being a constable), and threatened what he would do if they were not given up. Sleek cooly told him that he disregarded his authority, for he had no legal process to take them, his warrant not being renewed in this state, and that if they proceeded further they must go legally about it.

"In the meantime, Sleek sent word to Johnstown, from which a number of blacks issued and came to Sleek's, which alarmed some of the pursuers, especially the overseers who suspected a massacre. But Sleek calmed their apprehension, and told them they would not be injured; nor were they. They withdrew, however, from further pursuit.

"The blacks had their wounds dressed, and were soon conveyed on a sled to Johnstown, where some individuals espousing their cause took them in charge, and issued out warrants for their assailants, whereupon some fled the country; others gave bail, etc.

"Two hundred dollars reward was offered for J. G. The master of the slaves offered $300 reward for their capture, and a few hard-hearted wretches made further effort to reclaim them. When it became necessary to remove them to greater safety, they were transferred to the Quaker settlement in St. Clair Township (where the author James Blackburn talked with them), and from there conveyed to Centre County; thence to Clearfield County, and finally on toward Canada, where they probably arrived without further molestation and remained free from the accursed state of human bondage."

Final chapters of scrapbook series are written today

Sesquicentennial Scrapbook

#66

By James W. Siehl
and
Lois J. Siehl

Dedication . . .

To the memory of our worthy ancestors, through whose zeal for that which is right we have enjoyed and are now enjoying many blessings, —

To the present generation whose privilege it is so to use every moment of time given us to influence those around us in such a way that it may tend to further their eternal welfare, and that those who soon will take our places may have a worthy example to follow, —

To the generations yet unborn, who will have new problems to solve and who have an inherent right to the privilege of looking back to an ancestry that has been true to man and true to their God,

This volume is affectionately inscribed . . .

These carefully weighed thoughts would have been most fitting had they been intended specifically for this, the closing chapter of the Richland Township sesquicentennial history series.

However, the borrowed quotation was written in 1934 by Levi T. Eash as a preface to his work, the "Eash Family Record and History." Levi T. Eash died that same year — never quite completing his lifelong project of chronicling the Bishop Jacob Eash family story.

Levi Eash's voice rises from the written page to speak to us of things past. Voices have come to us in many forms this past year as we sought to capture a bright and sensitive picture of early life in Richland Township.

The pictures speak

Voices have spoken in the pictures you have lovingly shared — photographs of quaint homesteads, of families, of schools and churches; pictures reflecting people at work and having fun during the holidays of yesteryear; pictures which preserve the pastoral beauty once dominating this rich land. We are very grateful for the voice of pictures.

Voices have spoken in old record books. The voice of Daniel Yoder in his 1880 teacher's record ledger provides clear insight into the studies and school activities of the time, as did a similar 1879 listing by Amy Manges.

Minutes of township supervisors and school board meetings, terse, down-to-earth notes, reveal the little regard for "big government" in those early years.

A neatly handwritten 1924 census book by C. P. Trent served as another voice, fixing population areas, country lanes, family members, land holdings, immigration data and occupations before the suburban explosion.

Voices also have spoken from deeds, wills and maps.

They have spoken, too, in the sharing of family histories. Many times, these historical accounts go back to the root connection, tracing the family tie to a European immigrant. Often, they include bits of personal information — the kind so necessary in the development of a living, colorful presentation.

Voices spoke in the form of mementos — cherished school souvenirs and church programs tucked away in special boxes for many years. There also were postal cards and their sentimental voices of shared joy, holiday cheer and Doughboys "Over There."

Contemporary voices, too

And, we cannot forget the contemporary voices — those with a heart - without whom much of the way of life in early Richland and photo identification would have been lost. We refer — the voices of:

David W. Samuel, Harry A. Lehman, Mary Katherine (Dravis) Leffler, Donald G. Baumgardner, Erma (Hershberger) Shumaker, Orlando Seese.

Kathleen McClain, Mildred (Dovey) Grimaldi, Eliza (Hancock) Fisher, Nyle Hershberger, S. Elizabeth Green, Rose (Moss) Edwards, Bernice (Dravis) Tkacik.

Bertha (Yoder) Patrick, Goldie Yoder, Herman O. "Dutch" Weaver, Richard Sholtis, Martha (McMullen) Bloom, Robert L. Blough.

A. Ted Luther, Violet (Smith) Luther, Emma (Jacobs) Eash, Ann Jacobs, Robert Naugle, Thomas Weimer, Bernard Gleisner, Donald Fyock, Suie and Mahlon Wingard.

Grace (Miller) Constable, Patricia M. Shaffer, Eva (Singer) McFeaters, Ruth (Custer) Hardy, Harold Trent and Ed Warshel.

For the past 14½ months it has been our pleasure to be tuned to the various voices of the past and their story of generations gone. Our own roots have dug a little deeper as a result. We particularly are happy for the new friends the project has brought us.

This volume, then, is affectionately dedicated to all of you — the voices of Richland Township 1983-84.

About the Siehls

Those who have been following Richland Township's Sesquicentennial Scrapbook series may have wondered about the relationship and background of the co-authors.

Lois Jean Siehl has been librarian at the Highland Community Library for some 10 years. She is the daughter of Anna (Smith) Cuppett of Bedford R. D. and the late George M. Cuppett.

Her husband, James W., is a veteran reporter with The Tribune-Democrat. He is the son of Helen (Reese) Siehl, 320 Grove Ave., and the late Matthew E. Siehl.

Brother and sister

A former brick school house along Eisenhower Boulevard now occupies the site where this photo was taken 77 years ago in Walsall. Then, it was the Conrad Kunkle farm. The young people are William Kunkle and his sister, Agnes (Kunkle) Samuel, uncle and mother, respectively, of David W. Samuel, retired Richland School District teacher. The picture was printed recently from a glass negative.

'Flower' of Richland Township here

It has been said that the "flower" of Richland Township is represented in this quilting party. The photo was taken in the early 1900s with Weaver Mennonite Church, Scalp Avenue, in the background. Not all of the women have been identified . Crouched at left in the first row holding a baby is Alice (Blough) Hershberger. The baby is Mrs. William (Stanford) Hershberger. The little fellow to the right dressed in a suit with a stripe collar is Ira Hershberger. Next to him wearing a hat is Bruce Luther. Still in the first row, the woman to the right of the little girl in a pinafore dress is Elsie (Weaver) Shaffer. Next to Elsie is Lucinda Blough (Mrs. Charles Shaffer). In the second row, the second woman from the left is Mrs. Daniel Yoder. Mrs. Alex Weaver is to her right, and Mrs. Robert M. Luther is next holding baby A. Ted Luther on her lap. It becomes difficult to identify some of the others because of positioning. However, included are Mrs. James Weaver, Cevilla Hostetler, Mrs. Maurice Lehman, Mrs. Abram Hostetler, Mrs. Stephen Hostetler, Susan Baumgardner, Polly Wingard, Laura Baumgardner, Minnie (Speicher) Hershberger, Adeline Blough (Mrs. Henry Parker), Emma (Wingard) Fredrick, Mrs. Samuel Meyers, Minnie Hostetler, Mrs. John Wingard, Mrs. Frank Orris, Mrs. Ralph Veil, Mrs. George Wingard and Mrs. Albert Wineland.

Final chapters of scrapbook series

#66

Sesquicentennial Scrapbook

A look back at our looking back

By James W. Siehl
and
Lois J. Siehl

Over the past 66 weeks, the Sesquicentennial Scrapbook has focused on giving its readers a feel for the pioneer days of Richland Township. The aim was to recreate a flavor of that not-too-distant past when travel was by horse and buggy, when education took a back seat to the farm chores and God-fearing people thought enough of their faith to walk a dirt road from Geistown to downtown Johnstown for Mass.

"Oldtimers" such as Harry A. Lehman of 223 Luray Ave., a lovable octogenarian who must have had a leprechaun for an ancestor, made us laugh with his tales of life in a wooden one-room school house.

When he attended Hoffman School along Berwick Road, public education ended with the fifth grade. There was no indoor plumbing. A cool spring in the woods was the thirst-quencher. And, how about the "two-holer" outhouse — one for the boys and one for the girls.

Walsall spotlighted

If we hadn't heard of Walsall, David W. Samuel Jr. took care of that with his numerous photos and interesting accounts of growing up in that tiny section of the township along Eisenhower Boulevard.

A descendant of European immigrants who came here to work the coal fields, Mr. Samuel put Walsall back into the township's consciousness. He was a grandson of Conrad Kunkle, one of the early settlers here, and a son of a coal miner. As a boy, he worked the mines opened by the Lorain Steel Co. of Moxham. Mr. Samuel told of 10-hour days, laboring without electricity and burning coal oil in lamps fitted to caps — the forerunner to the carbide lights.

We are indebted to Mary Katherine (Dravis) Leffler for sharing memories she carries of her grandmother, "Aunt Kate" Lulay, telling whomever would listen about a personal experience she had with Abraham Lincoln.

"Aunt Kate" was one of six daughters born to Joseph Geis, who came to this country in 1839 from Germany with his bride and three brothers. Joseph Geis bought 200 acres of land here while on his honeymoon. A hard worker, his self-sustaining farm became so efficient that it became known as Geistown.

Mrs. Leffler, who now resides on Menoher Heights, Johnstown R. D. 5, says there is nothing in writing to substantiate the Lincoln story, "But I have heard it all my life," she said.

According to Mrs. Leffler, her grandmother had been a little girl when Union troops, on their way home less than a week after the battle of Gettysburg, had set up a camp in the vicinity of Joseph Geis' Half Way House — a place where a person could rent a room or refresh himself with a glass of beer. Mrs. Leffler is not sure why the property was called the Half Way House, but speculated it could have been because it was about half way between Johnstown and Scalp Level.

A special pat

The way her grandmother told the story she and several of her sisters had been carrying water for the troops, according to Mrs. Leffler, when Mr. Lincoln came on the scene. The president apparently had been traveling from camp to camp encouraging the men as they were returning to their homes after the bloody battle. Mrs. Leffler suggested that Mr. Lincoln possibly had come from Bedford, and perhaps was traveling toward Pittsburgh. As Grandmother Lulay so often recounted the experience, Mrs. Leffler said, President Lincoln patted little Catherine on the head and said, "You are a good little girl."

As this historical series comes to a close, looking back there were many highlights. We wrote about the Adams family — Samuel, his brother Solomon and their sister Rachel — who came from Berks County and settled here sometime prior to 1771 when Richland Township still was a part of Bedford County. Of how the family was attacked by Indians. Rachel was killed. The body of Samuel was found lying beside an Indian — the two dying in mortal combat. It is said they were buried in a common grave near what is known today as Cole's Crossroads.

Bernard Gleisner of Geistown gave us vivid pictures of early aviation in the township when in 1927 he decided to cash in on the popularity of the fledgling airport transportation business. Acrobatic barnstormers were attracting big crowds with their fabric-covered biplanes.

Mr. Gleisner and a partner went to Marshall, Mo., where they picked out component parts of Army World War I surplus parts and had a plane assembled. After his 45-year-old partner took lessons on how to fly the craft, they came back to Johnstown and began offering rides for a fee. Mr. Gleisner, a mechanic, had the job of maintenance and also as a stunt man. He walked the wings and did things like hanging by his legs from the axle to draw attention. People flocked to a Richland cow pasture for rides.

Stories come to mind about the Weavers, the Bloughs, the Hershbergers and other early settlers who brought stability to the township, building schools and churches, and laying the groundwork for municipal government.

One hundred and fifty years is not a long period as history goes — a factor why so much data was available. People still are living who are able to pass on information almost back to the grassroots told to them by their parents and grandparents.

Continuing to copy

While this will be the closing article in the series, the Highland Community Library, Luray Avenue, will continue to copy old photographs and file historical facts. Periodically, it is expected that subsequent stories about Richland's past will be published.

The Richland Sesquicentennial Committee has noted the cooperation of the board of directors of the Highland Community Library in making its facilities and staff available for this project. It also has commended The Johnstown Tribune-Democrat for its assistance, with special recognition to the camera department for the outstanding reproduction of old photos.

Sesqui
Parade
June
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1983

Elton
Road

JUN 5 1962

MAXWELL

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Township's past focal point of special party

By James W. Siehl

It was a night of reminiscing, singing the old songs, renewing friendships and scanning photos and exhibits of mementos from the past.

The occasion was Richland Township's Good Old Days Party held at the Holiday Inn, Scalp Avenue, sponsored by the Richland Township Sesquicentennial Historial Committee.

In the spirit of the evening, women came in dresses that had been worn by their mother or grandmothers — floor-length costumes 50 to 100 years old.

Draws laughs

Melvin Felton, wide of hips and more than 6-foot tall, drew a lot of laughs when he appeared in a German-style dress of the Dunkard tradition. His wife, Marge, also was appropriately attired in a similar costume.

Of particular interest was a map of the Richland region, prepared by Jennie Lehman for her 83-year-old grandfather, Harry Lehman, who from his memory pinpointed the names and locations of more than 50 farms of days gone by.

Nyle Hershberger, who has been researching the educational progress of the township, also prepared a map. It detailed the locations of many former school houses in the township.

Among them were schools such as Weaver, dating back to 1817, located at Mine 37 Road and Eisenhower Boulevard; Blough School, at Luray Avenue and Belmont Street; the Myers School, which was on the Solomon Run Road near Walters Avenue; and Govier School, then on Hunsinger Road just off Mt. Airy Drive.

A 200-year quilt, still in excellent condition, was displayed by Erma Shumaker. Mrs. Shumaker said the quilt is owned by Mrs. Charles Flack of 216 Dowling Road. According to Mrs. Shumaker, the quilt had been made by the grandmother of Norman Miller, Mrs. Flack's father.

Olive Wingard brought along an 80-year-old German doll, a bowl and pitcher set 130 years old, a compote 125 years old and a book of Christmas stories published about 80 years ago.

She also displayed early Western Union office equipment and a stereo viewer, which was popular at the turn of the century. It featured a three-dimensional look at photographs.

Sets the tone

In a brief program, Mrs. Lois Siehl, chairman of the historical committee, set the tone for the night's informal activities with a nostalgic presentation which included excerpts from an "I Remember Richland" essay contest, sponsored by the Highland Community Library.

The winners of the contest, Eliza Hancock Fisher, Mildred Dovey Grimaldi and David Samuel, were awarded plaques.

Mrs. Siehl announced the names of 31 recipients of a Golden Citizens Award. The hand-painted certificates, designed by artist Sally Stewart, were given to residents of the township 85 years and older in recognition of their community contribution.

They were prepared by Noreen Scheeler, Judy Weaver and Betty Baumgardner, with Sue Green assisting in the research.

Bernice Tkacik of Johnstown Unit 2, Disabled American Veterans Auxilary, presented an American Flag supplied by Congressman John P. Murtha in recognition of Richland's sesquicentennial celebration. The Flag had flown over the Capitol in Washington, D. C.

Musical entertainment was provided by the Laddie Timko-Johnny Adams duo.

Richland "Golden Citizens"

A group of Richland Township residents, 85 years and older, has been honored with a Golden Citizens Award as part of Richland's sesquicennial observance. The members include:

Marie Adams, Martha Bloom, Flada Blough, Samuel Brush, Rose Edwards, Loretta Erickson, Victor Erickson.

Effie Fyock, Edna Gaston, Lloyd Hershberger, Carrie Hoffman, Emma Jacobs, Alvin Kretchman, Florence Kretchman, Clement Layman.

Sydney Layton, Anna Lehman, Austin Lehman, Margaret Lehman, Newton Luther, Myrtle Malzi, Maude Miller, Margaret Parker.

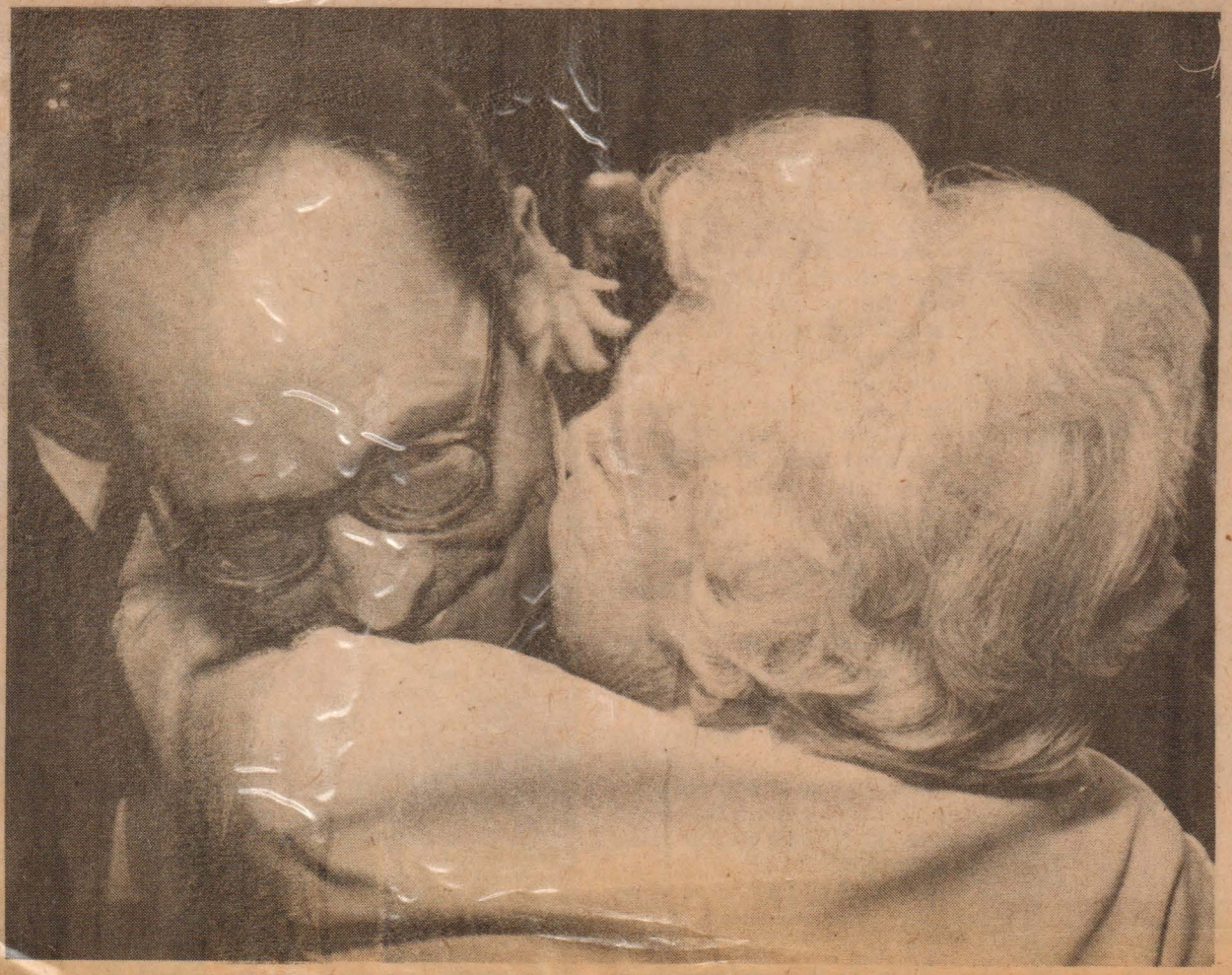
Wilma Roberts, Sophie Shaffer, Lily Wineland, Mahlon Wingard, Ralph Wingard, Suie Wingard, Sylvia Yager and Oscar Zane.

Melvin Felton &
Marge Felton Lehmen

Carolyn
Eshelman

Mr & Mrs Fred
Herlinger

May 19 1983



Todd Berkey/The Tribune-Democrat

Pioneer banquet

Gov. Dick Thornburgh was among those who attended the Pioneer Banquet at Casa Romani, held this week in conjunction with Richland Township's sesquicentennial celebration. At left, the governor gets a kiss from Olive Wingard. Above, chatting before dinner, are, left to right, Mary Schatz, Linda McCauliff and Carol Wilson.

Photo by Roger Kerekes

Richland is saluted

This float in Saturday's University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown homecoming parade salutes Richland Township on the occasion of the municipality's 150th anniversary. Homecoming activities at the campus focused on Richland's sesquicentennial observance. A UPJ spokesman said this year's homecoming attracted the largest crowd and number of units in the 13-year history of the parade.

Photo by Roger Kerekes

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